

# MILLIONS OF DICTATORS

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## PREFACE

THE hero of this book is the Average Man, of whom it aims to be a biography. The pedant may object that since every man is a sovereign individual, wearing the crown of a kingdom of his own, it is *lèse-majesté* to call a man average. In answer to this objection it may be said that the Average Man is a synthetic individual, combining the common characteristics of entire groups.

It must be remembered that the place in which our Average Man lives is not unimportant. A palace in Mayfair or a shack in the Urals is not an indifferent thing in a man's life. Because of the difference in settings one man may have a brilliant social life, and another never hope to rise higher than a tattered shepherd. The Average Men with whom this book deals had their birthplaces in the canyons of New York and on the wind-blown prairies of America's Middle West; they came from the City of London and the Midlands of England; they are French and German of all classes, Russians and Italians of all estates. These nations have been selected because they represent various approaches to cosmic problems, the tangible expressions of intangible yearnings. They may be or may not be the spokesmen of the *Zeitgeist* and the heralds of a new age of progress or retrogression. Let us see for a moment what interest attaches to these particular countries.



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In the United States mankind witnesses a groping for new forms of expression, on the one hand, and for new contents in old forms, on the other hand. Controversies are ripening with the emergence of a new class system. Old interests are becoming conscious of their rights, and well-protected fortresses are besieged by the armies of new ideas. Gradually the country is becoming conscious of the split between the two eternal antagonists: those who have and those who have not. Problems which had been thought to have significance only on other continents have come to haunt American life.

While the United States are seeking the least painful way to the new goal, the world looks on with surprised curiosity. What is being done in that country is no longer the concern merely of its 125,000,000 inhabitants. The United States have now become one of the major forces around which life revolves; the Atlantic Ocean no longer separates but unites the nations of the world. Although some countries may profess to detest americanization, they cannot resist the magnetism of America, whose sudden emergence into world leadership fascinates more than it repels. Whatever that country does is something for Europe to ponder over, and America's influence keeps on growing. The American Average Man hardly realizes in what a heroic rôle he is cast in European minds.

The French Average Man is of interest for a different reason. Flanked on both sides by the two leading fascist countries, French democracy appears to be in real danger. Its success in coping with the fascist problem may determine the future course of

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history. The impressive frankness with which contemporary France has adapted herself to some of the new conditions of the age reveals her remarkable political flair, which triumphs over all factionalism.

In Germany the observer marvels at the duality of the character of the Average Man. Does the Reich illustrate the truth that in all nations, as in all men, there are ingredients of two basic characters—Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde? Is Germany a school-example of what a nation may be driven to do as a last resort? Political awakening, some say; political suicide, say others. Meanwhile the Average Man changes into uniform and Teutonia resounds to the strong words of a self-appointed Messiah. Who is then the real ruler? We shall see.

And now a long jump to Russia, whose experiment even hostile critics admit to be unparalleled. There the Average Man is as the living Buddha, while at the same time he must keep his mouth shut. There one finds the greatest extremes, in a political system which places tremendous sacrifices upon the shoulders of the individual and makes posterity the winner. There old traditions are treated as sinful and novelty as virtue, the great uprooting process goes on with unrelenting frenzy, and its object is a different Average Man, a sovereign master of his will.

We shall observe the Italian Average Man in action. What is his destiny under fascism? How is he attracted and repelled by a powerful personality? How far is he the producer or the product of what Il Duce says and does?

Finally, a glance at the apotheosis of the Average Man. England's man-in-the-street goes his stolid

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way, pouring new contents into old forms, clinging to sentiments while disliking the idea of appearing sentimental. He represents the most successful effort of man, so far, to find his destination in his sovereign will. Admirers of democracy look to Westminster for further inspiration. As long as *demos* rules in England, the foes of democracy will have a hard time convincing the world that parliamentary rule is doomed. The average Englishman also impresses the world with his tenacious hold on the reality of power. He belies the prediction that the time has come for Britannia to abdicate her throne. The English Commonwealth of Nations has blossomed forth as a world community, its prestige unimpaired, its power still inspiring.

Who are these millions of dictators? They are not those of whom it has been said:

They eat, they drink and in communion sweet  
Quaff immortality and joy.

Beyond this negative quality, what is known about them? The birth of our little dictator is not announced by roaring guns, and flags are not flown at half-mast when he passes out of this world. His joys are scarce, his days are drab, his to-morrow is the copy of his yesterday. Small pleasures dot his way, while he stumbles on, skirting scarcity, struggling for security. This struggle is the essence of his life. He is hero to no one, except to himself in his day-dreams. Even if he creates world-saving thoughts, no newspaper will proclaim them. No wireless will carry his message to the four corners of the earth. Eager for self-expression, he may succeed in gathering

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around him a small circle of friends to whom he will try to retail his thoughts, and they may listen to him out of self-interest, since they, too, are anxious to sell their own ideas. But he is only spiritual cannon-fodder, sacrificed to puny and majestic causes by charlatans and saints. He is the object of the dictator's solicitude, the victim of propaganda, the Mass Man, carried on by unfathomable impulses, capable of diabolic meanness and divine strength.

He was the one who built the pyramids and died under the whip, his bones scattered on the white of the glittering desert sand. He fought among the nameless slaves of the army of Spartacus, his body cut to pieces by the mercenaries of Pompey the Great. He was the unknown monk burning midnight oil in his dank cell, pouring out his heart to God in naïve pictures illustrating the Bible. He was the Burgundian peasant in the army of Conrad of Montferrat, who died in the moat of Tyre as he was about to scale the wall. He was the tattered beggar at Nicklashausen, listening with rapture to a poor young shepherd who urged the division of church property before Luther and Zwingli agreed on the Marburg Articles. He was the dead soldier who could not celebrate the victory of the triumphant King Gustavus in the Breitenfeld battle of the Thirty Years' War.

He was the shaggy cave-dweller of the Faubourg St. Antoine, when the revolutionary Commune took the Hotel de Ville of Paris and sallied forth against the Tuileries, where *l'Autrichienne* was hiding behind upholstered golden doors. He was the bedevilled Cockney wrecking the monster machine, which he

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detested as the murderer of his joyless life. He was the proud burgher and the starving intellectual, the woman and the child—nameless then as now. He was the inarticulate factory hand serving a machine, too tired to live after his day's murderous work was over. And he is the modern Prometheus whose living body is torn to bits by the vultures of doubt and the impotence of will-less ambition. He is one of the trillions of countless generations, craving to find shape, failing and trying anew, stumbling towards his grave with unappeased hunger for light.

He is the Average Man, who rules.

For rule he does, though he died in the shame of fetters or on the gallows, as a criminal or saint. He rules even when he seems mere human putty in the hands of the master craftsman. In modern times he rules even more effectively. The dictators who monopolize the spotlight depend upon the obscure forces which he represents. While they may prevent him from speaking in public, they cannot prevent him from feeling, and his feelings are an elementary force which wrecks the strongest dictator if he is not quick enough to bend to it. He may be prevented from writing down his thoughts, yet he it is who writes immortal history upon the record of time eternal—more sovereign than the most autocratic ruler.

Only a few of these nameless dictators will be introduced in this book. Some of them are taken from life, others have a synthetic existence. The words of some of them have been actually uttered, and the words of others could have been uttered by them. Some of them have stories of adventure to

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tell, which, however, have not changed their status as Average Men. The bulk of the book is devoted to describing their ideas as they affect their country's history. The rest of the chapters deal with generalizations based upon these practical examples. We shall inquire how public opinion is created, and how it exerts its power through the Average Man. We shall also see how the wills of the nominal rulers and the nameless dictators may clash, and what results such a conflict may entail.



## INTRODUCTION

**A**T the Palais du Commerce of Strasbourg a group of royalists demanded that the French government be hanged and the republic be swept away. On the hoardings of nearby vacant lots the communists called upon the electorate to visit their wrath upon the faithless stewards of the State, rising in self-defence against the government.

In front of the dignified Frauenhaus of the old Alsatian city a group of young people chanted the *Marseillaise*, and shouted: "Vive la République!" The group which followed chanted the revolutionary *Internationale* and shouted: "À bas la république des voleurs!"

The Palais de Rohan witnessed a turbulent mass-meeting of the autonomy party, which indicted the country's rulers in Paris for various offences of malfeasance and non-feasance and strongly hinted that a few hundred steps away, just across the Rhine, law and order flourished under an energetic dictatorship.

This was democracy in action, employing its privilege of open discussion and mutual recrimination. The opinions which were expressed in this election campaign of France ranged from intransigent royalism to belligerent communism.

I walked across the bridge which connects France with Germany. Behind me was the Strasbourg

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Minster and the French tricolour, while in front of me was the church steeple of the town of Kehl and the swastika flag of the German National Socialist party. The customs official extended his hand in the fascist greeting: "Heil Hitler!" On the German side of the river monarchists did not proclaim their faith in the past, nor had the communists a chance to indict the rulers of Berlin. The news-stands at the corner of Adolf Hitler Platz did not display a medley of political opinions, as did the news-stands on the other bank of the river. All of them were regimented, a goose-stepping army of black types on white paper. This side of the Rhine all had to profess belief in one political divinity and subscribe to the same articles of political faith, under drastic penalties of the law. Even thoughts had to be held in check, for fear they might betray the unwary in sleep.

And yet in outward appearance there was practically no difference between the two banks of the river. The range of the Vosges on the French side, and of the Black Forest on the German, are twin chains of low mountains of similar structural formation. Their rounded summits reach the same altitudes, their meadows slope at the same angle, and the forests of beeches, pines and maples shelter villages that seem to be reflections of one another. The backgrounds of the inhabitants of the two banks of the river are substantially identical. As far back as man remembers they were the playthings of kings, pawns in the chess game of Romans, Gauls, Franks, French and Germans. At times the Rhine was a frontier, at other times it was merely an inland river; but at



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no time was it a barrier to the interchange of customs and ideas. It would also have been in vain to look for essential differences in the appearance and speech of the inhabitants of the two banks. Angular features, heavy bones and stolidity of carriage are typical of those who live under the tricolour, and also of those who swear by the swastika. They all speak the same German dialect, more or less mixed with Gallic words.

After lingering on the banks of the Rhine awhile, I drove across southern Germany to another boundary line, easily reached in a journey of half a day. Past German towns with an air of other-worldly beauty, past many-treasured Munich, I came to the frontier town of Simbach on the Inn. On the other side of the river lay the Austrian town of Braunau.

As the day was a national holiday, Simbach was richly decorated with flags and the picture of Adolf Hitler. I attended a local celebration at which the principal speaker intoned a prayer of adoration to the omniscient and omnipotent *Führer*. Cheeks were aglow with suppressed excitement as the audience listened to the eulogy; the ecstasy of the moment, no doubt, would have stimulated its members to offer their lives in the service of the human marvel if the call had come. After the celebration, veterans of the pre-war army led a parade, pounding their gouty legs on the asphalt while young Bavarian girls in *Dirndles* and boys in knee-breeches looked on with obvious pleasure.

Instead of enjoying this performance to the end, I made for the bridge across the Inn.

The roadway of the bridge was barred to motor

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traffic by a pole, a strong hint that the two countries were not on terms of friendship. On the Austrian side of the bridge, a double-headed Hapsburg eagle seemed to eye the intruder with suspicion. I was in Braunau, the birthplace of Adolf Hitler, but here there were no swastika banners, no portraits of him. Posters announced a political meeting the next day on "the danger of Hitlerism"! Beyond the Salzburg Gate the eye was attracted by the house where Herr Hitler was born, which the former owner, a Nazi sympathizer, had painted a vivid brown; but two Austrian soldiers were patrolling it, probably to prevent demonstrations!

"*Er ist ein gefährliches Individuum,*" the grocery clerk summed up his view of Hitler, and the peasant customer from a nearby village nodded emphatic approval of the opinion that Germany's dictator was a dangerous individual. The owner of the corner tobacco-shop liked the *Führer* even less, and expressed a view that he was the anti-Christ.

If I had greeted a policeman in Hitler's birthplace with "Heil Hitler", he would have marched me off to jail, and if I had tried to explain the Nazi point of view to the clerk, the peasant or the tobacconist, they would have taken me for a Nazi agent.

A local chieftain of the Austrian Fascist Heimwehr told me of his party's stand on a national and Catholic basis, as set forth in the speeches of the late Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuß and in the Papal Encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*. He saw Austria fighting not only her own battle but also that of the entire world, and the pole across the roadway of the bridge was in his eyes both a symbol and a warning.

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Here again there was no difference whatever between the inhabitants of the two shores and their background. On both sides it was the same pleasant countryside of rolling hills and luscious meadows, interspersed with clean little villages. The trees of both banks of the river felt the fresh breath of the breeze coming from the Bavarian Alps. Both on the German and on the Austrian side the church towers had the same simple lines and high peaks. The houses looked exactly the same with their heavy abutments of whitewashed stone.

The population on both sides of the river revealed no difference in appearance, dress and speech. They had shared a similar fate throughout the centuries, and, even when they happened to be separated, the boundary-line was unreal. And yet Adolf Hitler was a god on the German side and anti-Christ on his own Austrian side of the Inn.

The third frontier was marked by barbed wire stretching in an endless line across the Pripet marshes. The Polish soldiers who accompanied us got out of the train, which entered a sort of No Man's Land, and in a few moments there came into view a sign: "Proletarians of all Countries Unite!" The realm of capitalism was behind us and this was Russia, land of the proletarian dictatorship.

While on the other side of the barbed wire it would have been a capital offence to speak to a crowd about the blessings of the communist dictatorship, on this side it was criminal to praise capitalism. What was virtue on the one side was crime on the other; what was positive in Poland was negative in Russia. Both sides alike were forlorn marshlands,

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inhabited by peasants of the same White Russian branch of the Slavic tribe. Their history and traditions are common, yet this is a great divide, a line of definite cleavage.

Frontiers have a mystery of their own, compounded of the feeling that one enters a new world. On one side of the frontier progress may be in full speed while on the other time may have stopped. What is dream on one side may be nightmare on the other side; the heroism of one country may be the cowardice of its neighbour.

What is it that makes frontiers such powerful agents in a changing life? Do the people of Strasbourg really want to lay down their lives for democracy, while their neighbours in Kehl are ready to sacrifice all they have for dictatorship? Do the people of Simbach really worship Hitler, and their brothers across the river hate him with all their heart? Do peasants on the Polish side of the Pripet marshes love capitalism, and their brothers on the Russian side despise it? Do these dividing lines express deep-seated contrasts, or are they merely the work of well-oiled propaganda machines?

Above all, do these frontiers represent a new departure because of powerful persons in the past and present or because they express the genius of a nation? If one were to judge by the literary output on dictators, the first view would have to be accepted. Each year millions of words are printed about them, and the worship of which they are the objects defies all precedents. In them Carlyle's hero seems to have come into his own, as the possessor of a sovereign will. On the other hand, hundreds of millions are

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forgotten, mere ciphers in the vast human epic, an endless army of yes-men and yes-women.

But does this really mean that the Average Man is nothing but the plaything of tornadoes in human shape? Does it mean that Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin actually have the power to prescribe the line of history, using their wills to raise or depress the cultural levels of their countries, and disposing of the fates of countless generations, superhuman forces in soldiers' uniforms? The answer is No.

Hence the Average Man is our hero—the one who pulls the wires that control puppets such as Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin. A conclusion of the book is that the dictator is not a Super-Man, but perhaps a Super-Average-Man, a condensed version of the good and bad qualities which the Average Man possesses or wants to possess at that particular time. Since the masses cannot and will not follow bold flights of thought, it is mostly no advantage for a dictator—especially in our own time of democracies and democratized dictatorships—to be a genius. The masses want leaders to put simple ideas into everyday practice.

A dictator may think he is the guide of his nation towards a certain goal while in reality he is being driven, by forces superior to himself, towards quite another goal. Consider for a moment our example of Herr Hitler, who reached power as a defender of capitalism against communism. He was financed by capitalists, whose spokesmen he promptly placed in key positions. Besides, he is a reactionary by nature and training, and it would never have occurred to him to lead a revolt against the existing world order.

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And yet, while nominally he is the dictator, his movement is being driven towards a kind of national communism, which is highly distasteful to him.

Or take the example of the Russian dictator, Joseph Stalin, who considers himself the champion of an international movement, not realizing at all that he is the leader of a nationalist revival, the like of which Holy Russia has never seen. While his avowed object is the realization of the United Soviet Socialist Republics of the World, it was he who released the forces of national rivalry in Russia by inaugurating the Five Year Plan. The young Russian who spends sleepless nights over the secrets of his trade is driven onward by the spirit of competition with the foreign rival, and although he thinks his motive is internationalism, it is merely a Russian variety of old-fashioned nationalism.

But coming back to our hero: how are we to find him? Few people are willing to admit they are average, since we all consider ourselves the centre of the universe, the cause and effect of creation. Is it possible to herd hundreds of millions of human beings together, trying to find a common characteristic in all of them? Can we draw an average between, say, Aldous Huxley and the Australian bushman? Can thoughts revolving around man's most profound problems be brought into relation with obsessions of animal life?

In finding the millions of dictators who are the heroes of this story, some arbitrary selection cannot be avoided. Our Average Men cannot be those who lead a mere vegetative existence between living and dying—working, eating and procreating in

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between. They must stand on a somewhat higher level, and must take at least a passive interest in the problems of their nation. Even if the motive power of the Average Man's life is self-seeking, he must have some concern with what is going on around him. He will not be in this book the colourless individual residing at the exact geographic or ethnic centre of his country. Yet, since he is average, he must not be a man of unusual accomplishments.

We shall observe his activities as a citizen, his attitude towards his government, his conscious and unconscious efforts to assert himself in the management of his country's business. We shall see him dictating to dictators and writing history. We shall call on these millions of dictators in the countries which play the leading rôle to-day. Our search may enlighten us on the seeming mystery of the frontiers. It may also help us to find some answer to the many questions with which humanity is confronted in these days of storm and stress.

## AMERICA'S LITTLE DICTATORS





# MILLIONS OF DICTATORS

## I

### AMERICA'S LITTLE MAN LOOKS HIS GOVERNMENT OVER

THE forces which sway the millions of dictators of the United States are so mysterious that observers with the highest qualifications have been baffled. Most other countries have traditional public opinions to colour the life of the individual and determine the course of his loyalties. Class distinctions sometimes provide him with ready-made formulæ of preference and prejudice. Few countries are more often and with more insistence accused of standardization than the United States, but, curiously, there are many dissenting views about the nature of our standardization. One has said that all Americans agree on the essential quality of gold, while others have insisted that Americans treasure equality above all. Week-end visitors to our shores have discovered that all Americans act alike, use the same tone of voice and react to impulses in the same way. Maurice Maeterlinck deplored the "pitiless commercialism of America". William Dean Howells proclaimed that money was the poetry of our age.

Henry James spoke about "the huge American rattle of gold, the squalid cash interpretation put on the word success". On the other hand, the famed Comte Alexis de Tocqueville saw America's essence in a "general equality of conditions". Professor Friedrich Schoenemann, pursuing America's elusive ideals in two large volumes, sums up the United States as the land of deeply-rooted democracy, based on conservative national conceptions. This is in strange contrast with the other view of America as the land of anarchical *sans-culottism*, aggravated by execrable manners.

The vastness of the country defeats efforts to track down all forms of the power that makes and unmakes political ideas. We shall take a few types that seem to contain fundamental attitudes towards the government and examine them in real life. Norman H. Smith will be our first example. He is one of many millions, a ruler of his land.

Norman H. Smith is forty years of age, a book-keeper, husband of an exacting wife and father of a capricious child. In public life he is a voter, and as such represents one forty-millionth part of the opinion of the United States. In a way, he is one of the bosses of the President of the American Commonwealth—yet look at the difference when the occupant of the White House catches a fish and when Norman H. Smith catches one!

The presidential catch is heralded in screaming headlines; it keeps telegraph lines busy, supplies an army of newspapermen with raw material for exciting stories, and forms the basis of long, time-filling discussions. On the other hand, even though Norman's

catch is much larger than the President's, no such publicity attends it.

Norman H. Smith is that proverbial drop in the ocean, the average man. In the street he is one of the millions, a drab individual wearing a mask of obscurity, dressed in a dust-grey suit to match his dust-grey life. The bald spot on his head is spreading and what hair he has left is turning grey. His eyes have a non-committal gaze, and he shakes your hand with a non-committal grasp. He is the kind of man you see and forget. If he happened to stray into the society of Seekers of Originality, he would be found out at once and expelled. He would not dare commit himself to definite views, and his bag of tricks does not contain those of clever conversation.

Yet Norman H. Smith lives a life packed with romance and adventure. He was the aviator who flew the Atlantic, his teeth set in a death-defying purpose to make his mark. It was he who first saw the South Pole from the air, spent nights in its appalling solitude, and triumphed over the whims of nature. He was one of the Four Horsemen of Notre Dame's football team, performing prodigious acts of valour, and he was America's most popular baseball hero. He was the star radio crooner, wooed by swarms of film-magnates, and he was every person of popular fame about whom best-selling magazines like to weave their stories.

In his waking moments, however, he is merely one of the so-called toiling millions, and he would be stunned to see his name emblazoned in history as "Smith the Dictator," although the title fits him to

perfection. Before, however, devoting our attention to this part of his career, we must have a bird's-eye view of his daily life and work.

He was born in one of those lower West Side streets in New York, which shine with platitude. All the houses in the block looked alike, and the street even had a tradition in window-hangings. Its residents encountered difficulties in telling their homes apart.

Biologically Norman H. Smith is a real Manhattan cocktail, compounded of Irish, Scotch, German and Spanish ingredients. In his childhood he had the usual variety of children's diseases and the customary troubles with Miss Davenport, teacher in public school No. 12. He got the usual marks and learned to read and write, he no longer remembers how. Since his playmates found his name too "highbrow", he assumed the *nom de guerre* of Hank for his ball-playing career on the corner lot. He broke his nose, swallowed a penny in a moment of bravado, and acquired a reputation as a good player. When he broke his ankle he gave up his ball-playing career and once more became Norman.

After his public-school career, which was undistinguished by any scholarly accomplishments, Norman began to work his way up the social ladder, first as an assistant errand boy. His boss was a bully whom he put in his place in a brief but decisive battle, after which the bully thought Norman a "regular guy". Then Norman became an assistant stock clerk and spoke no longer of his job, but of his position. He began to set aside a certain amount each week, partly to finance his entertainment and partly to insure himself for that proverbial rainy day. He

drank in moderation and smoked merely to show that he was a he-man and not because he liked it. But, finally, the monotony of his work began to tell on his nerves and he set out in search of high adventure and a little more money. He let himself be persuaded by a friend to take up book-keeping at an extension night-class, in the hope that it would offer him more excitement and higher salary.

When the World War broke out, he was a full-fledged book-keeper. Now the way was open to romance as it appeared on the screen and stage. When the draft officer found Norman fit for duty he let himself be carried away by his momentary exultation. Romance in uniform beckoned to him . . . pulse-quickenning martial music . . . girls' sensual glances. He saw himself a hero leading his soldiers to victory, sword in hand, his chest invulnerable to enemy bullets. The hope of a delightful ocean trip overbalanced his fear that the trenches might be dangerous. Europe, which had haunted him, was now within his grasp. He dwelt delightedly on the thought of female admirers worrying about his safety. He would speed on to Paris, fêted at every quaint little station as the saviour of France! Paris! There would be French girls, the paragons of elegance and taste but not paragons of virtue. He would sip expensive fancy wines in their midst, while the natives looked on with approval. Then would come the stagelike battlefield. . . .

Is it necessary to say that his dream failed to materialize? The attractions of the Atlantic did not penetrate the ship's office to which he was attached as a book-keeper. Once more his life was encompassed

by ledgers and an adding machine, which he had to drive as relentlessly as he himself was driven by his superiors.

Brest was being punished by a biting northern wind when he arrived in France, and instead of the exciting trip to Paris he got a rickety cot in a dismal wooden barrack. The enemy was an ill-humoured sergeant-major. Life in the barracks was no more eventful than it had been at home. He took a dislike to the queer Bretons, who paraded their absurd hats and comic-opera costumes with as much gravity as if they were real Parisians. And what about that much-advertised elegance of the French women? The girls he picked up in town gave him commercial caresses, and did not look for heroism in a man.

The armistice bugle sounded without his having fired a single shot. Norman had fits of despondency at the thought that the war had been won without him, and he blamed both the sergeant-major and the French for his fiasco. Before he was taken home, he managed to get a ride to Paris, and there, too, his disappointment was acute. Was this shell-shocked crowd of gloomy people the French of real life? His yearning for romance was far from being appeased when he was taken aboard a transport bound for home. He was a failure, so far as the war was concerned.

He warmed up only at the sound of the brassy music which greeted the returning soldiers. The slaps of his relatives on his shoulders were fairly hearty, but his best girls had attached themselves to soldiers with more exciting tales to tell. His old employer betrayed no sign of being overcome with

joy at seeing him, and after a cool handshake told him that in a month or two there might be a vacancy for him. The employer was careful to specify that everything depended upon the future course of business, and he made no attempt to disguise his disappointment at having been cheated out of his legitimate profits because of the premature end of the war.

Norman showed the sights of the town to a "buddy" from California, who talked so much about the glories of the Golden West that he decided to extend his search for romance and a living to the Coast. He spent a large part of his slender resources on the trip across the continent. His buddy turned out to be a porter in a department store and his promised "pull" was not strong enough to land a job for him.

Once on the trail of high romance, Norman decided to go all the way, and he applied for a menial position on a Pacific army transport. As a war veteran he got the job, and for six months he sailed the seas, still uncertain as to whether this was the life that suited him. Finally he decided he had had enough of it, landed on the Coast, got into rough company, and seldom had money enough to buy a decent meal. He saw that this kind of life was not made for him and went home C.O.D., as he used to say in later years.

Back in New York there was only the slush of the April rain and the penetrating dampness of a poorly heated room. But America was returning to "normalcy", Norman along with her, and he got a book-keeper's job, which gave him a living. Now



he could afford to go to the movies with his regular girl and to the theatre with his "special", whom he admired inordinately because she was a highbrow and read expensive magazines. But having convinced himself that "two could live as cheaply as one", he married the regular, who was pleasantly ignorant of the world's affairs.

Although the "special" girl's broader knowledge made him feel inferior, she had made her mark on his life. He bought a copy of the *Story of Philosophy* and meditated over it until he fell asleep. He also bought a book about human psychology, and began to cultivate his personality with its loquacious aid. He now believed that the road to success lay across vast jungles of letters, so tremendously involved that none but the elect could find his way. One night he attended a fashionable professor's lecture on the mysteries of human behaviour, and although he made only fitful attempts to fathom its obscurities his heart was filled with heroic pride at his own somnolent valour.

Having risen to the status of a head book-keeper, he had a small office of his own, staffed by a stenographer and an errand boy. He called himself the office manager, and took great pride in himself. He considered it below his dignity to answer the telephone, and trained his stenographer to cross-examine every caller before he decided to grant an interview. It was in line with his newly acquired importance that he switched to the *Herald-Tribune*, mainly because it advertised itself as the paper of business executives.

Those were the days of Coolidge prosperity, and

Norman was heart and soul for the President. He felt his job secure, his modest investment in stocks growing by leaps and bounds, the ball games exciting, the movies anodyne, his wife devoted. He was loyal to prosperity, which he considered a perennial quality of the United States. In Calvin Coolidge he saw the embodiment of common sense, and discovered in him certain traits which made him as nearly a saint as New York's financial district was ever likely to hail. He had no patience with the President's detractors, as he called his critics, and accused them of lack of loyalty to their country.

He deplored the President's decision not to "run", but consoled himself later with the thought that America was safe in the hands of his successor, Herbert Hoover. He experienced his first doubts about presidential infallibility when the stock exchange was buried under an avalanche of selling orders which wiped out most of his paper profits, and he became utterly disillusioned about the occupant of the White House when the Wall Street boom collapsed completely, burying the rest of his money.

Norman's political ideas at that time were as simple as his political vocabulary. Having called Calvin Coolidge the country's best President since Washington, he now called Herbert Hoover its worst President. He cherished this opinion, however, only in his heart, because he disliked the thought of deviating from the strict party line of Republicanism, and also because his favourite newspaper was as yet very cautious in the expression of its dissent. Being a Republican once, he thought it was his covenanted duty to remain a Republican forever. Having accepted

the idea that the Republican party stood for prosperity, he felt like a traitor in doubting the all-curing power of a Republican President.

How Norman H. Smith voted at the Hoover-Roosevelt election will forever remain a mystery. To anyone who might have watched him at the polls, that haunted look on his honest face must have appeared extremely suspicious. Although at previous elections he had freely advertised his preference for the Republican candidate, this time he kept quiet about his selection. If the world had paid the least attention to Norman's secret thoughts, it would have found food for curiosity; but the world did not heed these secrets, and so the mystery's explanation is still hidden in Norman's heart.

His first reactions to the utterances of President Franklin D. Roosevelt were decidedly not unfriendly, for which several circumstances were responsible. His salary had been cut to less than a half of its pre-depression peak, and Norman became possessed of an inarticulate idea that all was not well in this worst of all possible worlds. His political life, once safely anchored to Calvin Coolidge, was now adrift on the turbulent sea of doubts. He cast about for a saving hand and took notice of possibilities which previously he would have rejected with the utmost scorn.

Communism, for instance, he had always considered one of the unspeakable horrors, nurtured by criminals, aliens and madmen. He could not understand why in a free country all professional Bolsheviks were not stood against a wall. But one night, after

his small fortune had bidden him good-bye for ever, he was led to reconsider his former views. It happened at a party of friends, where a man, impeccably dressed and speaking plain American, gave a sympathetic analysis of the world-saving claims of bolshevism. Next day, Norman re-read three times the definition of the word "communism" in the large office dictionary, and if the term was not entirely clear to him, he blamed neither himself nor the dictionary but the communists.

Nevertheless, his attention was aroused and he began to scan newspaper headlines of dispatches from Moscow, which he had previously skipped. Gradually he ventured to read their first paragraphs. This nodding acquaintance with communism made him believe that the communists did not look in real life like their caricatures in an unfriendly press. After a good supper and in the comforting presence of his wife, who thought him clever because of his interest in such abstruse matters, one night he read a magazine article about Russia and was pleased to find that the operation had been quite painless. So pleased was he with himself that he repeated the contents of the article to his wife, elaborating on them with flights of imagination; and that night her caresses were warmer.

All this is brought out merely to explain that Norman H. Smith was no longer a full-fledged Tory, and that he was ready to tolerate any experiment which might be useful in bringing back prosperity. His reactions to the New Deal legislation in its earlier phases were not, therefore, those of a hidebound Republican. When a man whose salary had been

cut only ten per cent suggested that Roosevelt might be tempted to imitate the Russians, Norman was incredulous. His views of the New Deal in the Roosevelt administration's honeymoon days were not greatly at variance with those of many Wall Street lights.

The great crisis of Norman's political life arrived when he lost his job. The very idea of standing in line for bread and soup filled him with horror, and he thought the world had come to an end. For a time he managed to finance his home by obtaining loans on his insurance policies and selling his motor car. His wife made ties, at home, through which she earned a few dollars a week. But this was not the life that Norman had known, and he was overwhelmed with cold perspiration even in his overheated apartment, the rent for which was long overdue.

He might have done something utterly desperate, such as voting for the socialists, if there had been an election at that time. Since, however, election time was far away, this period of despair passed without any trace on history so far as Norman was concerned.

But after many tribulations he got a job, which paid little for much work. Having been in the streets, as he thought, the comforting presence of a high stool and a heavy ledger filled his heart with pride. He looked around with an air of triumph, announcing to the world that he, Norman H. Smith, had beaten the powers of darkness and was once more on top.

But no sooner were his mental and financial balances re-established than he returned to his original

loyalties. Once more he viewed the Republican party as the safest bulwark of America in national politics. Even his distaste for Hoover had worn off, and again he considered party loyalty above everything else. The New Deal experiment struck him as distinctly bolshevistic and therefore an alien body in the history of the country. Having passed through the purgatory of poverty, he once more saw the way to the heaven of prosperity lined by the guardian angels of the Republican Old Guard. Through a series of mental acrobatics he reached the old conclusion that in conservative government there inhered a virtue which no experiments could equal.

\*            \*            \*

Norman H. Smith is only one of several types, American in their individualistic approach to government and human in their self-centred interests.

I announce the great individual, fluid as Nature,  
                   chaste, affectionate, compassionate, fully armed;  
 I announce a life that shall be copious, vehement,  
                   spiritual, bold,  
 And I announce an end that shall lightly and joyfully  
                   meet its translation.

Although Mr. Smith has probably never read these words by Whitman, if he were articulate enough to know what he wanted he would most likely say that this was his ideal of government *v.* individual. Neither has he read Rousseau's words: "The learned researches of the theory of the State are, for the most part, nothing but the history of ancient abuses."

It is not so much on account of "learned researches" but rather because of tradition and instinct that Norman H. Smith distrusts government. In his allegiance to authority there is nothing of the ecstatic self-denial demanded of subjects in autocratic countries. Emerson's unremembered words haunt the unconscious life of America: "The tendencies of the times favour the idea of self-government, and leave the individual, for all code, to the rewards and penalties of his own constitution . . ."

Let us see how tradition operates through Norman H. Smith. His ancestors were scattered all over Europe when King George III educated the American colonies into revolution, and it was only many years later that they began to try their luck in the New World. Norman's distaste for arbitrary rule is, nonetheless, as strong as if he himself had been a victim of autocratic rule. This distaste was acquired in school textbooks, the words of which live on in him as eternal verities.

It must be admitted, at the same time, that Norman might have become a loyal member of the Democratic party if in his early youth it had been a Democratic and not a Republican presidential rally which he attended. The first political meeting he ever attended determined his future loyalties. The candidate's speech was pungent and emphatic, especially when he bruised his fist in his best table-banging manner, telling his audience that the Democratic party was organized ruin and national bankruptcy. He quoted statistics to prove that under Republican administration the country could not help being happy and wealthy. He overwhelmed

the more impressionable of his listeners by a frantic appeal to save the country from Democratic disaster. He shouted at the top of his voice that this was an individual appeal to each member of the audience. Norman was impressed, and he took the Republican party into his heart as per instructions.

Paradoxically, the violence of Norman's reactions to governmental assertiveness did not interfere with his tolerant attitude towards the drawbacks of democracy. He could never get excited about judicial corruption, in which he failed to see another version of authoritarian misdeeds. While he spoke deprecatingly of politicians in general, he rarely used his power to vote political malefactors out of office. He got only mildly indignant about the various investigations into municipal government; as democracy was so dear to him that he forgave even its abuses. He would have been offended beyond appeal if some one had suggested that his attitude was anarchistic, or that he connived at the very acts of authoritarian rule for which he bore eternal grudge against the rule of George III.

In illustration of Norman's inconsistencies, it may be noted that while once more he became rabidly Republican in national affairs he had no aversion to voting for the candidates of the corrupt Democratic political machine in New York City. When accused of inconsistency, he answered with childlike innocence that New York's Democratic party could neither make nor unmake national prosperity. It was his barber, Joe, with whom he liked to discuss political questions, who talked him into supporting the local machine, by a vivid description of the advantages a



Democratic voter in good standing derived from such a course. Joe was also the barber of the Democratic district leader, whom he described as a "regular guy". After this conversation Norman was more convinced than ever that politics was a sordid business, which, however, did not prevent him from acting upon the advice of Joe the Barber. Meanwhile, he had bought a new car and from that day on he took less care to observe the traffic regulations.

When it came to fundamentals, Norman admitted that government was a necessary evil, so far as public security was concerned. While he had no high opinion of his city's police force and judiciary he was ready to grant the need of the public functions they performed. At the same time, he felt a certain sentimental attachment for the government, as expressed in the Constitution and symbolized by the flag. For reasons of which he was not entirely conscious he established a certain hierarchy among the various agencies of government. He did not like the legislative branch, and considered Congressmen and Senators mere windbags, although he had never attended a session of Congress nor read a single issue of the *Congressional Record*. As for the executive branch of the government, he was inclined to look at it with favour, especially if his view coincided with public opinion as expressed in his favourite newspaper. As he was more interested in personalities than in issues, the President offered him a better medium in which to embody the United States than the less coherent Congress. Sometimes, however, he dissented from Presidential policies. But the Supreme Court of the United States received his undiminished

respect, probably because he saw in it the most effective protector of that ethereal substance known as liberty. His enthusiasm for government was revealed violently at the sight of the United States navy, as it steamed up the Hudson on its periodical visits to New York.

Norman's interest in foreign affairs was extremely limited, except when the dramatic quality of an international event appealed strongly to his love of the eccentric. He looked at the Continent with uncomprehending amazement and defensive resentment. He could not understand why the Old World should be a battlefield of vicious passions, and thought the United States would be best off if it severed all connections with the countries across the seas. He was inclined to make Europe responsible for most of the world's ills.

Unlike his European colleagues, the average men of Paris, Berlin, Rome and Moscow, Norman H. Smith felt no urge to convince his neighbours about the truth of his own political creed *via* leaden bullets. He seemed to feel that, since politics was largely another aspect of the everyday business of life, he had no right to impose his views upon a fellow-man.

It would be unjust to suggest that Norman was inferior to his European fellow average man for taking a less violent interest in politics. The truth is that the conditions under which he and they had been brought up were radically different. The European little man has been struggling in the toils of political controversies for several centuries. This heritage has impressed itself on his mental processes,

and politics is no pastime for him but a condition of life. The political over-education of the articulate European is in sharp contrast with the political under-education of the unthinking masses, which has facilitated the climb of unscrupulous exploiters of the racial heritage to predominant positions. The less the illiterate peasant is in control of his emotional reactions the easier would-be dictators find it to sell him their quack medicines.

In the United States, on the other hand, the average man had no surplus energy to engage in political battles on a grand scale. The forces of the vast country cried for a harness, and the little man was fascinated by the magnitude of the job. The rich reward which he received for his toil made him concentrate all his energies on his work, and he set aside politics as a field of professionals. The country's productive system called for specialization, which accentuated the advantage of the politician. The specialists of political life took their cue from the general tone of American life, which favoured the bold. The corruption which thus resulted alienated many sympathies from the people's business.

Political indifference in America has given place from time to time to intense interest. Norman H. Smith was born into an age that is becoming increasingly political. This is natural, since a chronic economic depression has released certain energies which in more prosperous times would be used for different purposes. Gigantic unemployment figures, vast governmental projects, and astronomical amounts of public expenditures have aroused great interest in the administration's rescue work. The government

was forced into business by circumstances, at first welcomed and later resented by private interests. Several would-be world-savers and self-appointed dictators focused attention on issues with mass appeal. The unemployed Norman H. Smith turned to them for help. Besides, he had plenty of time to go into politics. Europe's little man has passed through the same process, and now America's average man has reached the stage of political wonder, and perhaps of action.

It is not difficult to foresee that, irrespective of the turn of America's economic fortune, Norman H. Smith and his fellow average men will retain at least some of their newly acquired interest in politics. Individualism ceases to be a religion where the riches of the world no longer suffice to afford access to easy living for the majority. Men pull together in the pioneer era because the exuberant forces of nature defy the futile efforts of an unaided man. But they also pull together in the face of adversity, when social planning is needed to coax either production or distribution into more efficiently co-ordinated ways. Irrespective of what the enemies of government in business say, the community cannot stand aloof when an earthquake strikes the land. In such emergencies man, the individual, yields supremacy to man as a member of a social organism. Individualism that is rugged can keep up its chin only under exceptionally favourable conditions, and no high-pressure propaganda has ever succeeded in staying the tidal waves of history-making forces. Laws passed in the face of nature's laws are like gossamer in a hurricane.

## MILLIONS OF DICTATORS

We shall examine some more specimens of the millions of dictators of the United States. They all represent various aspects of life, as conditioned by the spiritual atmosphere of this country. They are men, fighting and striving, seeking themselves and the best ways of life, sometimes naïve but more often sublime: Man the Creator attempting to be master of his own will.

## II

### THE LITTLE MAN IN THE GREAT MIDDLE WEST

**H**E is the symbol of a great contradiction—the master of an imperious nature, the petulant wilfulness of which holds terror for the stoutest heart.

Out of the Arctic regions oceans of icy air roll across the great plains, driving man indoors and numbing life. Then the gruesome dark of the northern skies discharges its swirling snow, accompanied by a devil's symphony of shrieking winds. Snowflakes perform weird pirouettes and vanish into the unknown with a broad sweep.

Summer visits its droughts upon the countryside, making nature shrivel and hiding its retreat behind a screen of dust. Over endless stretches of corn the stagnant air settles with ferocious tenacity, bringing the flush of fever to the human face. A short spring and autumn's weak-kneed efforts to make good the past mitigate the cruelty of a self-centred nature.

And yet man lives as a master and not a slave in the landscape dominated by this climate. His cement roads have defeated distance and his motor-cars are of the utmost comfort. The bathroom

civilization has asserted its rule, and the great American Middle West is a triumph of man's will. Compare with it the steppes of Russia and see the difference for yourself. There nature is just as wilful, yielding by inches to a civilization inspired by America, but how much smaller man is!

Let us see, for a moment, how in this setting of limitless horizons *homo politicus* asserts himself. If ever a man was eager to be a sovereign by his own right it was the original settler of the Middle West. He came as a hunter, a fugitive from civilization, always ready to pull up stakes and strike for the tall timber. Or he came as a farmer, seeking a place of stabilized existence, ready to perform a hero's work for the wages of menial labour. His work created patches of civilization in a savage world, and in a miraculously short time nature became tributary to man's will.

John MacMillan, whom we shall take as an example of the Middle Western man, cultivated his land near the village of Gwynedd, in one of the states of the northern Middle West. His father had tilled the soil in old New England until his restless blood drove him into the recently opened parts of the country. In his new surroundings he had the elbow-room he had always craved, also a chance to give free scope to his trading instincts, to buy and sell land, working on it as a pastime and worshipping God in the solitude of his endless fields. John inherited from him his capacity to work. Meanwhile much of the countryside had become populated with men of his type, good neighbours, hard-working, quiet peasants, who lived a self-contented life.

John MacMillan's principal interest in politics was limited to such practical problems as his taxes, the new State road, of which there had been much talk, the new school, and the now defunct AAA processing fees. At the same time, politics was interested in him and came to him in the form of several candidates for public trust. A candidate for Congress, for example, assured John that he was the very best type of American, especially if he endorsed his candidacy, which he would take for an unfailing sign of political sagacity.

Since John was nobody's fool, such talks made him smile and he made haste to forget them, so that he might devote his manly energies to the less noble but more useful cause of pigs. While he was articulate, even voluble, when talking about them, he was at a loss to find apt words about such abstract subjects as government and State. Not that John lacked community-mindedness! He attended church, which he considered a sort of Sunday morning club, and it was one of his life's pleasures to doze off during the minister's sermon. He often chided himself for praying to God out of fear of nature's incalculable whims and not out of religious sentiment. He knew that his faith would not stand the test of sincerity, and he was genuinely sorry.

He was a philosopher in taking nature's whims with calm resignation, and he was the very reverse of a philosopher in not being critical of the universe. He had his moments of exaltation on spring mornings, when the sun's flushed rays touched the trembling drops of dew. On the whole, though, nature appeared to him more as a source of income than of æsthetic



joy. He loathed city life and considered its inhabitants worse than slaves.

If he had artistic impulses, they were hidden deeply in an unconscious that seldom revealed itself. At certain moments he felt that he should derive more pleasure from inexpensive beauty, and then he listened to lessons on music-appreciation over the radio. His attempts to enjoy Wagner, however, resulted in quiet wonder that such noisy performances should rate so much publicity. Jazz, on the other hand, made his blood tingle with sensuous anticipations that were to remain ungratified. His house was decorated with the traditional prints that occupy places of honour in millions of American homes. John also had a library, more for its decorative value than for the intellectual food it gave. From time to time he bought a book of nation-wide fame, as he liked the idea of keeping step with the world.

But we must return to politics and to John's part as a driving power of his government. One long winter evening the conversation between him and Mrs. MacMillan drifted to the complimentary words of the Congressional candidate, to which reference has already been made. John was always pleased to introduce a new subject, as it was no mean task to keep the fireside conversation alive for several hours a night. His wife warmed up at the candidate's quoted words, and that night she looked at him with different eyes.

John now began to realize that women want romance, and it was as a means of obtaining fuel for the nightly palavers that he took an increased interest in politics. Headquarters for deep political

thinking was the Corner Grocery Store of Frank Monitor, postmaster of the village of Gwynedd. With neighbours dropping in for sociability's sake, and also to call for their mail, they discussed the abilities of candidates and sundry local subjects at this emporium of politics and potatoes.

One day Frank remarked with feigned indifference: "Senator X told me an hour ago . . ."

What Senator X told him was of little importance in comparison to the fact that the Senator had told him anything at all. News of the event spread with the traditional rapidity of wildfire, and one of the neighbours suggested that the event should be commemorated on a memorial tablet. Although the neighbour was known as a local wit, this suggestion was taken seriously.

John MacMillan told his wife about the Senator's visit and her imagination retouched the picture, placing her husband in the centre of the historic scene, hob-nobbing with the pride of the State, who was also a national figure. At her next meeting with Mrs. Norah Gumphry, her neighbour and best friend, she hinted that John and the famous Senator had been discussing matters of national importance, which made Norah green with envy and gave her husband an unpleasant day.

News of this intelligence also spread towards the back country, and one of the citizens suggested that John might make a fine figure in the legislature, which made Mr. MacMillan blush with embarrassment and his wife blush with pride. The very fact that the suggestion had been made was cause for Mrs. MacMillan to see her husband in the lawgiver's

part. Until the end of their lives this will probably remain one of the most glamorous experiences of their days.

Although John did not become a lawgiver, he became a better citizen, conscientious in the performance of his civic duties at the polls. Since it was on election days that he exerted his sovereign power, it will be of some interest to find out what considerations swayed his choice.

While John MacMillan never heard of John Stuart Mill and the theories of democracy, he was a typical product of the era of free speech and fettered thought. His political decisions were arrived at by processes almost too dark to fathom. Like most of his fellow citizens in every part of the world, he was subject to those elementary forces that sweep out of nothing, like the blizzards that blur the outlines of the landscape. There stirred in him the thoughts and hopes of men of whom he had never heard, pioneers of democracy and martyrs of political freedom. These thoughts steered his political conduct and led him to believe that his will was the sovereign power which uttered the last word at the polls. The newspapers he perused, the conversations he heard, the radio addresses to which he listened contributed their share to the building up of the force that took final shape in his vote.

In John MacMillan there lived on the traditions of the men who crossed the continent in past decades. In him the spirit of immortal Daniel Boone, of the Bidwell pioneers, and of the tragic Donner party produced a curious politico-psychological mentality. Those intrepid pioneers bequeathed to him examples

of heroic co-operation. The nature of their undertaking made the utmost in collective self-help an absolute necessity. This unity was brought about despite their diverse origins. As soon as men and women left behind the well-trodden paths of the eastern seaboard they also left behind their self-assertive individuality. Dissidence became tantamount to betrayal.

The same spirit was transferred to present-day party loyalty, shaken only by political "landslides". Fealty to the struggling band of pioneers was translated into allegiance to the party's cause. This gave birth to party regularity, extolled by its beneficiaries as a major American virtue. The billion-dollar business of politics evolved a code of ethics of its own.

Party regularity in and around Gwynedd had also another cause, which was less idealistic in its conception. Since power of selecting candidates for elective and appointive positions rested with the party bigwigs, prospective public servants had to be party workers at first, which meant that they must have made patriotism their business. The loyalty of wavering adherents was insured by the watchword of patronage. The local newspaper would be denied the lucrative advertisements of sheriff's sales if it made an attempt to adjust its publicly professed political views to the privately owned convictions of its editors. Nor did it dare to doubt the wisdom of officials in key positions. The son of Tom Tavish would not have received the Congressman's endorsement to enter the Naval Academy if it had not been for his father's right political opinions. The public-service railway would have been detoured to serve

deserving party workers if the owners of the lands it was to traverse had not been of the accepted political faith.

There was also the active help of the local newspaper, which claimed to be the paper with the largest circulation in the farmhouses of the entire county. It also claimed—as is the custom with such papers—to be the oldest journal in that part of the Middle West, having been established more than half a century before. Its hidebound Republican policy was not so much the reflection of the political views of its editors as of their belief that a newspaper is bound to fail if it attempts to mould public opinion instead of being moulded by it.

It will be seen from the foregoing that John MacMillan's politics was undiluted by profound speculations about the essence of the great underlying problems. In his desire to simplify those aspects of life that had no direct relevance to corn and pigs, he limited the theoretical part of his interest in politics to speculations about Republicans and Democrats. Having been brought up in a Republican atmosphere, reading a Republican newspaper and listening to Republican hot-stove-league discussions, he had little chance, and even less desire, to acquaint himself with Democratic arguments. Conditions changed somewhat when politics invaded the air over the radio, and John had an opportunity to bootleg some heretofore forbidden political information into his house. Soon, however, he realized that the new information could not be assimilated with his existing stock of knowledge.

John had a social conscience, which was neither

sentimental nor intolerant. Since there was little actual poverty around him, he could not realize its importance as a social problem. He approved of charity and contributed to the Community Chest, but saw no relation between a new world order and the problem of daily bread. It was only after the great drought had hit the next county that he became aware of the government's function as an agency of emergency-assistance. While wishing that the government had acted more promptly, he adhered to the theory of the traditional policy of *laissez-faire*.

Towards the wealthy he bore no grudge, although he felt a vague resentment against "Wall Street" and often spoke about the corrupting influence of unidentified money powers. On the whole, however, he looked upon wealth as an inspiration to young and old alike. His favourite magazine articles were those that dealt with the origin and growth of the great financial aristocrats of America. In a moment of inspiration he said *à propos* of wealth that fast vehicles were bound to be smudged by occasional patches of mud.

The Roosevelt landslide in 1932 had a strong effect on John MacMillan. At Frank Monitor's Corner Grocery Store the new era furnished a fresh supply of conversational raw material. Frank himself was among the first to appreciate the dramatic value of the alphabetic agencies and he impressed his hearers with lengthy dissertations on their functions. Since Gwynedd and its environment had been severely affected by the depression, the interest in the political novelty was more than academic. The improvised "round-counter" conferences, which were the delight

of the neighbourhood, drew up a balance-sheet of the country's affairs, showing a heavy burden of liabilities. None of the participants questioned the government's right to give a helping hand to rugged individualism.

In the honeymoon days of the New Deal, broad vistas of the new era dazzled even the blizzard-bitten inhabitants of Gwynedd. The time was maturing for the cosmic messages of Uncle Townsend, Dictator Huey and Demagogue Coughlin. They all agreed that the main issue was money, about which they kept up a relentless barrage of talk. America was to be swept off its feet by an old-age pension, by the prospect of a house and a car for every white voter, and by banking reform. The shrine of all these money religions was the cash register. The scramble was on and the air was filled with the restlessness preceding great social changes.

Gwynedd's republicanism underwent a sea-change in those early days of the New Deal era. Those were the times of the first presidential fireside talks, when bank presidents and factory hands vied in singing the praises of the Superman in the White House. Everything he said and did was seen as the emanation of a matchless wisdom. His was an infallibility confirmed by the belief that at the wave of his magic wand depression would recede into the shamefaced past.

Shattered in their adherence to undiluted republicanism, members of the improvised eulogy society in the Corner Grocery Store discussed the New Deal from every angle and found it to their liking. The guaranty of its soundness was its simplicity.

It meant the mobilization of the country's resources in a World War upon depression. Frank Monitor reached dizzy peaks of eloquence in outlining the essential phases of the New Deal, the principal points of which he had extracted from the editorial columns of the State capital's only Democratic paper. The New Deal meant relief from the onerous mortgage burden; it also meant better prices for corn and pigs, and lower tax rates for the farmer. At last the Middle West seemed to come into its own, recognized as the backbone of the country. We are in fairness bound to admit that Gwynedd recognized that the city must also have some share in the fruit of improved economic conditions, so that it might be in a better position to buy the products of the farm.

Although Gwynedd was only a small dot on the map, to its inhabitants it was the universe itself. The winds of the north that swept across the country with furious energy were caressing breezes in comparison to the hurricanes of oratory which the New Deal released. If the local Congressman could be trusted, it was Gwynedd and its hardy population of Mid-Western pioneers who were responsible for the dramatic turn in the nation's life. The changed orientation of Washington not only caught the fancy of the farms but it also touched the pocket nerves of its population. This was a revolution in political thought which promised to become one of the most vital events in American history.

As months passed by and the forces of the old order regained their composure, as conditions consolidated and republicanism regained its dignity,



another change became perceptible in the attitude of the Corner Grocery Store and of John MacMillan towards the New Deal. While the benefits of the AAA were beyond doubt and only few farmers complained that their grievances were unheeded, the clouds of a political thunderstorm began to gather over Gwynedd, and it broke with unexpected speed. The New Deal, which a few months before had been thriving in the sunshine of popular favour, was driven to cover.

The change did not originate in ideological mutations, but in the recuperative power of the Republican party discipline, coupled with the belief that the worst was over and that life might again resume its normal course. To tell the truth, Gwynedd had little to do with the change, which began its transcontinental trek in the die-hard East, where the money-changers became jealous of the New God. They had been quiet for a long time, frozen into apathy by the suddenness of the onslaught on their quasi-divine prerogatives. Once the counter-offensive began, however, it assumed the fury of an elementary force, propelled by the gold of the defenders of a supposedly immutable order.

The shield of the attackers was the Constitution, on which it was written—in their interpretation—that the country's greatness consisted in making the sun abide while the harvesters of the money crop were at work. Their motto was: "Nothing must change." They denounced the soldiers of the New Deal as the allies of the communists. All was to remain as it had been under the old order, and the conservatism of wealth was to rule the land. Foreign entanglements

were to be shunned not only in the political but also in the economic field. A great wave of spiritual self-sufficiency swept the land. The yellow press emitted discordant shrieks at the sight of men with original thoughts. The guardians of privilege awoke to danger and decided that America must remain the bulwark of a changeless world.

John MacMillan was slightly bewildered by the claims of the new and old. He also sensed that the fight had passed the stage of being mere party strife between Republicans and Democrats. He was not, however, ready to accept any of the outlandish substitutes for progress. While he did not know much about fascism, the little that he knew did not appeal to him. As to Russia, he was hesitating between benevolent neutrality and personal resentment at the communists' efforts to displace God.

After about three years of Roosevelt, John MacMillan was definitely back in the Republican fold. His private business was on the upswing and he failed to see what relief the New Deal could bring him. He was slightly impatient with his own heretical thoughts in the past, and tried to minimize his deviation from the right path. Since, however, he looked at the problem from the pragmatic point of view, he could not work himself up into a holy wrath which could explode in a general denunciation of New Deal policies.

In this respect, too, he was different from his European confrères, who consider their politics a personal concern, even though their movements are at the mercy of dictatorial wire-pullers. John MacMillan would probably be incapable of the sadistic

race-saving ardour of the Hitlerites or the world-saving devotional exercises of the religious Bolsheviks. It would be difficult to imagine him in the goose-step parade of the "Ja" men of the Reich or in the arena of Marxian intellectual acrobatics of the communists. Such thoughts as "Whither are we headed?" were not made for John, since he realized that his country was rich enough to survive the worst inconsistencies of Washington officials and the anarchy of unprincipled prosperity-riders. His confidence in the stability of the United States was strengthened by the belief that, no matter how great the follies of his country, they were nothing compared to the insanities of the older but less wise world. He was a democrat by temperament, for he felt himself equal to man and nature, strong in his level-headed conviction that relentless work could make the forces of nature and the whims of man subservient to his will.

### III

#### AN INTELLECTUAL SEEKS LIGHT

**I**NTELLECTUAL has become a word of contempt only in recent times, since civilization deserted its aristocratic ideals and turned to mass production. The man of thought plays second fiddle to the man of action. The philosopher has holes in his shoes and is happy to find an underpaid position at some inferior school. At the same time, the man who commands and is unimpeded by thoughts is driven by in his expensive car, a challenge to life's spiritual values. The vulgarization of existence goes on while moral principles tumble into unmarked graves.

Pliny said in his eulogy of Trajan that neither the individual can deceive the mass nor the mass can mislead the individual. America's own Abraham Lincoln coined the pregnant phrase: "You cannot fool all the people all the time." This shows that, in these days of grab and run, they would be out-distanced. The race is on among the unscrupulous shouters and the uninhibited heirs to the cave-dweller's murderous culture. Civilization's veneer is peeling off and naked lust parades its lecherous desires in the fire of admiring glances. Morality has come to be regarded as cowardice, and principles are held to be admissible only as long as they are useful.

Meanwhile, what does the intellectual do? Does he surrender his soul to the victorious machine, giving up the battle against forces that have swept the skies clean of their divinities and transformed earth into a flaming Inferno? Far from that! Once more the value of thought is demonstrated by the bitter guerrilla warfare its practitioners are putting up against the monopoly of action. In America they took up the struggle under greater handicaps than in most countries of the western world. Here the need of strong fists has placed meditative nature at a discount. The man in the street sneers at the philosopher and can hardly resist the urge to knock off his hat.

But the reaction has set in against the arrogance of money. In their underground refuges the intellectuals are ready to give battle. They are helped by the weariness attendant upon high-pressure life, which finds its greatest reward in increased pressure. The cacophony of the jazz age begins to tell on the nerves of millions who have taken refuge from disturbing thoughts in life's Tin Pan Alley. The revenge is at hand, as millions begin to realize that the Tower of Babel is no empty myth and that there is a limit to the patience of man's innermost nature with mere size. The news-stands near America's large public libraries are filling up with publications of the advance-guard. Students begin to doubt and question, faced with the menace of being launched into a world that knows only the rule of the fist. Serious books have a chance to win recognition from a public that is growing tired of the eternal sameness of murder and the denatured love of popular magazines.

## AN INTELLECTUAL SEEKS LIGHT

The intellectual hates to be in a group even when fighting for the recognition of human rights, and hence he may feel it as a slur that he is included among the millions of dictators of Everyman. But the intellectual is on the way to become a mass force in America and elsewhere. Although he and his kind may not yet be able to man the political barricades against the old order, he no longer stands alone, for his strength is on the increase day by day.

Clarke Thorndyke, who shall symbolize for us a type, was a real intellectual and not merely his own caricature. His intellectualism was not confined to reading *The Nation* and voting for Norman Thomas. He had been recently appointed teacher in a high school in a northwestern State. He was young and wanted to save the world. There was in him the passion of the missionary and also the cold logic of his business-man ancestors, which made him realize the fact that he could not save the world singlehanded. He was determined, however, to do his bit and the school idea had a strong appeal for him.

From this it may be gathered that Clarke was wise beyond his years. He had also courage, and there was in him a dash of the Norwegian Vikings, from whom he claimed descent, despite his scorn for genealogical snobbishness. One of his uncles was a socialist deputy in the Norwegian Storting and Clarke was proud of him.

Clarke's parents had come to America before he was born, and settled in the Northwest. His father owned a small factory, where the workers knew him as a "regular fellow". Clarke admired the way he resisted the temptation of the money devil and ran

his plant in a patriarchal spirit. After the depression, however, Thorndyke the Elder could no longer maintain his high standard of wages, and the men denounced him as an enemy of labour. A strike was called, which literally worried the old man to death. "Ingratitude" was the word his two sons heard him whisper before passing away. Clarke's elder brother, who took over the factory, turned out to be a real slave-driver. Under him the factory prospered even in the midst of the depression. Clarke severed all relations with him and struck out for himself.

He tried the traditional ways of young American intellectuals in search of social justice. He immersed himself in the writings of Marx, which made him sleepy but enthusiastic. He liked Franz Mehring's book on Marx more than the master himself. Then he fell prey to the fear that too much reading might paralyse his powers of action. From numerous signs, seen only by would-be missionaries of social equality, he perceived the coming end of America's unrepentant capitalism. He was absorbed in the contemplation of the Russian experiment and refused to lend an ear to the voices of disappointment. Eager to learn and teach, he sought the company of like-minded people and was surprised to find many who shared his hopes. People whom he had suspected of being Philistines turned out to be addicts of the *Moscow Daily News*.

Many of his companions waged war against tradition, because in them burned the hatred of the expected thing. They were implacably at work, demolishing the foundations of old knowledge. "Ignoramus" in their way of speech was equivalent

to "capitalist"; "rich" and light-hearted, the bourgeois was unconscious of the world's impending doom. Clarke, who went his way with open eyes, had a few amused moments at the expense of his younger friends, whose gloomy philosophy resented the shining sun and fragrant meadows. This was a new world the values of which were in a constant flux. Things were worshipped for their novelty, and a certain brand of knowledge was recognized as eternal truth. The idols of the inner shrine were under the protection of the young ones, who had talked themselves into the ferocious combativeness of the mother bear defending her cubs.

Clarke also got in touch with a group of teachers and clergymen of his age, many of whom believed in revolution tempered with caution. Their idea of the great social upheaval was modified by their descent from Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon races. They were pacifists in domestic affairs, and saw the goal at the end of an arduous road.

Looking at it from a different angle, the groups with which Clarke maintained contact had sections which were impressed by the ritual of Russia's pre-war revolutionaries, and sections that maintained that the special conditions of the United States required a new approach to the solution of old problems.

Even though their work had a different direction, the Russophiles had acquired the terminology of the Russian conspirators. They were happiest in dingy meeting rooms filled with smoke and took a masochistic delight in endless discussions. It was from this section that the suggestion came to go out among



the people and spread the new idea. This suggestion was rejected, however, when the actual difficulties were realized. The majority agreed that as teachers and preachers they were in a better position to make headway than by assuming an unnaturally romantic rôle.

Since we are concerned here with a definite social attitude, let us have Clarke speak for the group he represents. It must be understood, of course, that since his group rejects standardization, his words merely indicate a certain state of mind.

"The average American with money," Clarke Thorndyke says, "considers the government an insurance agency for his private interests. His ideal is a supine President, who lets him get away with murder. The American without money, on the other hand, considers his government an inevitable evil, and pictures the representative of his country in the form of an inflated gentleman sitting on a pork barrel.

"Special interests cry out against governmental interference with business every time the government attempts to do something for the people without money. These haters of governmental interference are like the medieval condottieri, who had their own laws and agencies to enforce them. The Pennsylvania Coal and Iron Police, for instance, are a private army of anti-social interests, usurping government functions. There is also a Pennsylvania Coal and Iron Judiciary—not only in that state—which metes out law in accordance with the wish-dreams of the coal and iron barons.

"The Constitution of these sovereign interests

knows no balance of power, and their responsibility is only to their pocketbooks. They are the President, Congress and Supreme Court of the United States rolled into one. Laws of the common mortal were not made for them. Nero was less immune from the laws he enacted than they are from the laws of the land. As the son of an industrialist I have met several of them, and found them charming people, who drink their cocktails like gentlemen. They also have a certain sense of humour, up to a point, beyond which they turn sour and make short shrift with jokesters. They have their charities, which help them reach a compromise with their conscience and convince themselves of their social use.

"Although some of them deal intelligently with their factory hands, they do so because they know the value of a well-oiled machine. They are intelligent enough to know that man, too, needs oiling. In my youthful innocence I once admired the humanitarian side of their work, and they thought I was joking.

"Their apostles are Adam Smith and Ricardo, although they have never heard of them. These two Englishmen—if they could come back to life—might spend a few pleasant hours with them, although they would probably find them too conservative. These industrialists know of Marx and Lenin, but are not sure of the spellings of their names, and hate them as only people with money-obsessions can hate. One of them told me that those two anarchists should be clubbed to death like mad dogs. He was hurt when I informed him that they have long been dead.

"They believe that this would be a perfect world if the reds and pinks could be lined up against a

nicely whitewashed wall. They have a mystic respect for their own wisdom, which they measure with gold. They believe that everything in nature would be well-balanced if left to its own devices. The crucial difference between them and us is that they are anarchists and we are the friends of order. We believe that mankind is stumbling from one chaos into another because of its failure to plan the very essence of its life-conduct.

"You may recall the conversation of Voltaire's Bachelor of Arts with the North American savage, which I re-read the other day. The man of science was trying to convince the Indian that this was the best of all possible worlds. He admitted that men ruined and murdered each other, but added that they all the while extolled equity and moderation. He quoted the famous calculator who had proved that from the War of Troy to the last war in North America there had been killed in pitched battles not less than five hundred and fifty-five million six hundred and fifty thousand men, without reckoning young children and women buried under the ruins of cities and towns which had been set on fire.

"After all has been said and done, this is our civilization. It is in order to avoid the continuation of this existence of catastrophes that we must inject some intelligent planning into our lives. This world of ours is inhabited by some two billion human beings; blacks and whites, yellows and reds, head-hunters and Nobel Prize winners, sun-worshippers and Christians, murderers and saints. Each of them is a perfect little cosmos, with sovereign needs and ways of gratifying them. The lady on New York's

Fifth Avenue decorates her sagging flesh with thousands of dollars' worth of silk and fur, while the Papuan girl wears a string of pearls and feels perfectly dressed.

"Unceasing activity tries to satisfy these millions of demands. Explorers penetrate the jungles, comb Tibet, sweep the Arctic and survey the Antarctic from their flying machines. Countless people have sacrificed themselves in this gigantic search of new thrills for the palate and the eyes. For the same reason thousands of people are killed every day in industrial accidents.

"What holds these activities, joys and tragedies together? My industrialist friends blandly say that the object of the world's rotation is profit. They say that everything is perfectly balanced and, since they have a grocer's mind, they point out that if a trader fails to find the buyer for his goods he stops carrying them and if the manufacturer finds no market for his produce he stops his machines. In theory all this is very simple, but in practice there is always a lag between supply and demand, whence the vicious circle of depressions, as we cheerfully call these plagues.

"These money-obsessed individuals are the social parasites of our system. They are the ones who cause the various modern forms of plague, such as World Wars and World Economic Crises. Their fights for new markets and high-pressure hopes of stimulating the profit-making capacity of their plants are responsible for mankind's great evils. They skim the cream, while the little fellow dies for his fatherland. If they found one-tenth of the flaws of our economic system in a factory machine they would junk it in

no time. If all the hardships for which they are responsible were paid for by the big fellow we should have a brand-new system at once.

"If our earth were an economic unit there might be some sense in suggesting that life's natural forces are at work in balancing the economic factors. But the world of to-day consists of some eighty economic sovereignties, which have their own tariff policies, trade preferences, and export and import restrictions, not to speak of their grudges and hatreds. Europe is the school-example of this trade-criminality. There no merchandise can travel a few hundred miles without bumping against some tariff Everest.

"Why do we stick to all these absurdities? Simply because we are addicted to the interests of a handful of people against the two billion inhabitants of the earth. They are powerful; they control our thoughts and speech. Our free speech is *their* free speech. Our greatness in the technical field takes our breath away, but when it comes to deriving pleasure from these achievements we are centuries behind. In the pioneer days of industrialism the predecessors of these gentlemen needed encouragement. But they are no longer pioneers—and still the public is at the mercy of their greed. Now they order government out of business, so that the place of business in government may be all the more secure. Our embassies and legations are the branch offices of their mammoth concerns, getting business for them, representing their interests abroad. Our navy is the strong-arm squad of the industrial magnates."

Clarke had worked himself into a white heat. Next he sought to show that the size of a group was

not indicative of its power. He insisted that this time there was every chance of the battle between progress and propaganda being decided in favour of the former. In this connection, he objected to the current use of the word "radical", which was perverted to mean something reprehensible and extreme.

"The American people," he continued, "are opposed to overseas terminology. They don't like, for instance, the name of socialism, which seems to them alien to our soil." If this were true, he objected, the United States would be immune to the laws of human nature. Certain needs seem to have developed certain forms of social consciousness, in which some foreign countries anticipated us. Because of the privileged condition of this continent, such needs arose here at a later time. Now that they have become of prime importance, it would be foolhardy to scoff at one of the most constructive ways of dealing with social problems. It would be just as foolish as to try to exclude the sun from our country on the ground that it comes to us from the East.

"At the same time," he continued, "I have to admit that this dislike of things European has a certain justification, as that venerable old world has pulled certain tricks which it would be well for our land not to emulate. Since we like our own pet prejudices, when the time comes for us to start a new life we shall probably stick to our non-European terminology. No less an authority than Upton Sinclair maintains that as a Democratic candidate he polled at least ten times the votes he would have received as a socialist candidate, even though his

platform was no different. Socialism will come to America under a different name.

"The influence of the so-called radicals is vastly superior to their voting strength. The older parties are gradually taking over many of our ideals, while using them as weapons against us. The New Deal has been attacked as a socialist device, which it is not, although it has incorporated several social ideas into its programme.

"Some people say that our up-hill fight is hopeless, as Americans are habitually conservative. I maintain that they are no more conservative than their economic situation makes them. We are helped by the derelicts of depression, who are accumulating a vast amount of radical energy that is all the more explosive as hunger and humiliation drive them into fits of fury. Under the American system, before the record-breaking depression, everybody was supposed to have his piece of cake, and the man with little money and a large appetite considered himself a rightful aspirant to the good fortune of the millionaire.

"Now, however, the social frontiers are becoming stabilized. Research has brought forth such startling facts as that about five per cent of our population controls nearly ninety-five per cent of the savings in this country. The depression-poor no longer hold the view that patience will breed miracles. Although the popular press tries to keep the new ideas from the people, feeding them with murder and family scandal, we know that not even Siberia and the knout of the Russian imperial policy could keep the new ideals from the people of Holy Russia."

Clarke's wife, a young woman just out of college,

where she studied social sciences, listened to her husband with evident approval and called attention to the rapid spread of radical ideas among the young people who have not as yet faced the problems of life. Mrs. Thorndyke expressed herself with the fluency of one who had a thorough training in discussing these issues:

"The young people with whom I am in touch, particularly young women of graduating age, are worried about the future. This is the depression generation, which has seen the economic structure of the country shattered for over six years. The parents of many of them have lost their livelihood. What are the prospects of the younger generation upon leaving college? They are eligible to work in department stores as sales-girls at two-fifty a day, with Sundays and holidays off. Young physicians and lawyers are in actual want, and even though several months in arrears with their rents they have to act the part of prosperous professionals. All would be well if they could afford to live the way they do, but the truth is that they are heavily in debt to their relatives and their future.

"Among the young people there are those, of course, who rally to any movement with an attractive name and a certain air of novelty, and who are attracted to socialism for that same reason. It seems to me, however, that their number is not large. Larger is the number of those who, while not in need themselves, have the broadminded approach of unspoiled youth to these subjects and who feel that they cannot stand aloof when humanity is faced with one of its great battles.



## MILLIONS OF DICTATORS

"One may say of these people that they have discovered the need of a higher level of moral comfort. I mean to say that they are no longer satisfied with mere physical comforts, such as pink bathrooms and miraculous motor-cars. These young people would like to feel the warming inner comfort that comes with the realization that one is doing one's duty towards the community.

"America being so much in love with youth, and youth being in love with progress, such a development was bound to result. This may be the younger people's reaction to the brutalization of life. Materialism has been rampant in this country too long, and the time may be ripe for a moral awakening. Our younger generation is ready to teach its parents. Man always needs some ideal to worship, otherwise he falls to the status of the jungle beast. Social conscience is the only great force to save a decaying civilization."

Both Clarke Thorndyke and his wife were deadily in earnest about their belief in a new order. Before I left them, Clarke showed me a sentence in a book of Miguel de Unamuno, the Spanish philosopher, whom he was reading: "Our thought cannot be divine thought, but creation and action are divine. The real God is not the God of contemplation but of deeds." This is what makes Clarke a force to be reckoned with. Intellectuals are, after all, also enamoured of action.

FRANCE'S AVERAGE MAN

## IV

### A FRENCH DICTATOR OF THE GOLDEN RULE

**N**O country has had more discoverers than France and no nation has been more highly praised. The Frenchman insists on attention and expects flattery even from the casual observer. Although France boasts of being an unstandardized country, she also likes to boast of her cardinal virtues. Many foreign observers have accepted the French view of her character.

"The French mind is architectural," said Harold Nicolson, an Englishman. "It is governed by a sense of order," said Salvador de Madariaga, a Spaniard. "The French have order in their heads, but disorder in their railway stations," wrote Friedrich Sieburg, a German. Michelet, the French historian, wrote: "England is an empire, Germany a race, and France a person. It is through personality and unity that man rates high among the living creatures." Victor Hugo sang a pæan to his country: "France is Athenian through the beautiful and Roman through the great. Besides, she is good."

We may accept the word of these authorities that the French mind is well ordered, but who can say that order reigns in the political life of France?

Since the Frenchman as a citizen indulges in an excess of personality, he lacks the faculty of putting his shoulder to the wheel with his fellow citizens. Hence the French political parties are loose groups preserving the individual's independence of thought and action. The average Frenchman calls himself a radical because he dislikes the regimentation of conservatism.

The expectation of life of the French cabinets, since the establishment of the republic more than three scores of years ago, has been less than six months. Witnesses of a chaotic session of the Chamber of Deputies in Paris are inclined to express their doubts about the architecture of the French mind. Is there any other civilized country in the political life of which the call of the moment and sudden whims carry so much weight as in France? In less than a century France has staged half a dozen major revolutions and swung from the extreme reaction of the reign of Charles X to the extreme radicalism of the Paris Commune. The same century saw the growth of a French imperialism which is second to none, and of anti-imperialistic sentiment which looked askance even at the acquisition of the most profitable colonies. It saw the reactionary outbreak of the anti-Dreyfusards downed by the radical authors of the separation of Church and State.

The little man of France was the first one in the world to ascend the throne of his country and become its autocrat. The carmagnole hysterics of the Jacobins had no parallel in the American revolution. But the same little man let himself be duped by Napoleon's magnificent obsession, which glorified the *fata morgana*

of his heroic strivings, while reality kept on mocking his hopes. He then let himself be trampled upon by the hoofs of the horses of Napoleon the Little, only to find himself the slave of the unscrupulous politicians of the early Third Republic.

If there ever was inconsistency and disorder, France leads the band. Yet out of this chaos emerged the new order which gave Europe a new set of laws. The hundred years it took France to find herself have been well spent, since during that time she had acquired a new ideology.

There is significance in the fact that the English and French reached democracy by divergent roads. The English took the highway of necessity, which they also found the line of least resistance. They did not argue about methods, nor try to convince themselves of the logic of their progress. They went their way, which seemed to them to serve the best practical purpose.

The French, on the other hand, attempted the system of trial and error in reaching their goal. Behind the barricades which the ragged inhabitants of the wretched faubourgs set up against the rule of Charles X, Louis Philippe and the army of Versailles there was, indeed, a logic and a sense of order. Instead of extemporizing with the useless, the French masses went to the very core of the problem with muskets and battle-axes. French history was the result of the effort to adjust a faulty social system to the immutable laws of nature. It was the consciousness of a better world order which stirred the tattered revolutionaries of the barricades to action.

Incidentally, democracy ought to derive some comfort from the fact that two nations, whose ideals and ways of thinking are so much opposed to each other, have reached the same conclusion, the English with their intuitive method and the French with their rigid adherence to the law of logic.

The French approach to government often leads into curious by-ways. The State is the tax-collector, and no other person is more disliked in France. The State is the draft officer, and the French are not militaristic, though they are military in case of need. The State is bureaucracy, the third-degree methods of which the Frenchman loathes. The Frenchman considers the State his enemy, for which reason he wants to capture it, and he keeps on wanting to capture it even when he is in possession of it.

On the other hand, the Frenchman is devoted to the idea of the nation, which is not a machine like the State, but a living body. *La grande nation* has the spiritual mission of shining in the darkness of the age. Although the Frenchman envies the American for his money and dislikes the Englishman for his self-assurance, he believes that as a nation he is on the very top. Nor is it possible to shake this belief, as the Frenchman has the quality of doubting his greatness only for the pleasure of rediscovering it with renewed vigour. The little Frenchman has not the self-assertiveness of the common American, who always seems to throw down the challenge: "I am as good as you are." He does not need to say such things, as he knows he is as good as, if not better than, his betters. Nor is he conscious of the

paradox, as his own paradoxical life makes him immune to self-deception.

In no other State, therefore, is the little man as sovereign as in France. Hence the luxuriant political life of the country, which reflects the variety and colour of the national character. Only a few of these specimens will be mentioned here to serve as examples of a larger assortment. First we shall see the man of the happy medium, who calls himself Radical and Radical-Socialist. Then we shall take a look at the conservative and bid the French dictators adieu by visiting the Left Wing soldiers in their lairs.

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"The nation is the territory," said Maurice Barrès. These words should help to explain the political existence of our first Frenchman, Pierre Dupont. He would be unimaginable outside of his setting in the city of Arles, in the very heart of the French Midi. *À propos* of him, a few general statements may be in place.

The average Frenchman likes the romance of his home, and of the vaporous pathway leading down to the little brook. He also likes the romance of the sun and moon, not to speak of the stars, at which he looks with proprietary interest. But he likes all these things in France. Ronsard knew himself and his countrymen when he wrote that only the fish, birds and animals of the forests change their place of abode, *mais l'homme bien rassis en sa terre demeure*. For the same reason the bulk of Frenchmen never understand any other nation. "The world tour is

not a French custom," Paul Morand wrote. While other countries are parts of a continent, France is a closed vessel, a complete existence, in which Europe is interested, but which does not interest itself in Europe. "It was not until the year 1714 that a smuggler named Barbinais the Gentle, driven by the truly national desire to cheat the Treasury, ventured on a world tour, and his boat was called the Growler."

The Frenchman is so self-contained that he regards everything outside his country with suspicion, if not with dismay or outright hatred. He may be critical of himself or of his neighbour, he may call his government a bunch of profligates or crooks, and yet he will hold that the collectivity of all this, *la France*, is beyond reproach—the quintessence of beauty, virtue and wisdom in a world of ugliness, sin and stupidity.

Attachment to the soil makes him fundamentally conservative, but attachment to the past causes him to assume recklessly bold labels for his political loyalties. As a rule, the majority of France votes Radical and acts Conservative. Of the typical Frenchman it has been said that he is a radical-socialist, cultivates love as an art, likes *pommes frites*, and saves his money for his old age. Pierre Dupont was just such a Frenchman. We are interested in him as a radical-socialist, and not as an artist of love or a lover of potatoes. In his bearing nothing suggested his radicalism, as the term is understood in the English-speaking countries. But then he called himself a radical-socialist because he was neither a radical nor a socialist, but merely a *pensionnaire* of the golden South of France.



M. Dupont was sixty-five, but when told that he did not look half his age—since exaggeration is dear to the heart of the French South—he took the compliment as his due. He had been an official of the sub-prefecture of the department of Bouches-du-Rhône. He was basking in the munificent sun on a bench of the public park of Arles, and his placid countenance was a fitting reflection of his state of mind. He took a grave interest in the play of half a dozen well-dressed children, whose chirping voices sounded like the song of little birds. His eyes caressed lovingly the banks of riotous flowers which curtsied in the breeze coming from the Rhône. Apart from the subdued voices of the children and the honking of an impatient motorist the town radiated a calm contentment which seemed to spread to the very limits of the universe.

“Voilà, monsieur,” Pierre Dupont said, “c’est la France,” and he extended his arm in a fond gesture. “Elle est belle,” he declared in a voice that brooked no contradiction, and threw a kiss at the outlines of the distant mountain, at the sky and the sun. To Pierre Dupont, Arles represented the very centre of the world.

We went for a quiet walk, visiting his favourite spots in the town. In the Musée Lapidaire he marvelled at the sarcophagus of Cornelia Iacoena, as if he beheld it for the first time. He lost himself in the contemplation of the delicate stone flowers, the freshness of which defied time. Here, he said, the tremendous civilizing influence of classical Rome was still a potent force.

Arles was Dupont’s *petite patrie* and he loved his

*grande patrie* mainly because his native city was its part. He delighted in the harmonious living of the Midi. A tall girl passed us by, a real Arlesienne, her thoroughbred race written on her dark hair, her straight nose of classic amplitude and bold brows. In her, too, the beauty of the Roman race survived, but in the flash of her eyes and quiver of her calves there was the audacity and sensuality of the Vandals, Moors, Huns, Visigoths and early Gauls. She was dressed in rustling black and wore a white tulle neckerchief.

"She is the picture of harmony," Pierre Dupont commented with a glint in his eyes. He seemed to be ready to dwell at length on the subject of harmony, when his eyes fell on the Arlesienne's swaying hips and he spoke no more.

The bells of the Cathedral of St. Trophime struck twelve, reminding M. Dupont that this was the hour for the ritual of the *déjeuner*. With quiet expectation on his ruddy face, he took me to a small restaurant near the river, where he has had his lunch for the last twenty-five years. There he was received with the respectful familiarity due to a former public official and a *habitué* of the house. He took his place with the solemnity befitting the occasion, facing the door. In honour of his guest, he ordered a small bottle of Sauterne, instead of the *vin blanc* which was his daily fare.

The restaurateur, whom he called Paul, was a voluble, fat man, whose great passions were Camembert and politics. Paul believed in frankness, and he made no secret of his great ambition to capture a seat in the Municipal Council of Arles. He liked

and venerated M. Dupont, who represented the glamour of the official world, and he was eager to shine in the stranger's presence. He began the conversation in the traditional vein, complaining about the policy of Paris, which, he thought, was ruining the country. Obviously, he would have been unhappy without the chance of complaining about something.

Pierre Dupont listened to Paul's eloquence with the supercilious air of a man who had once been an official of the sub-prefecture, and the glance he gave the inquisitive visitor conveyed the contented thought that in a great democracy like France even a man of Paul's social standing had a right to air his views. Around M. Dupont's lips there hovered the complacent smile of the man who knew more than he cared to say.

He began to voice his opinion with the glibness of the man who has repeated the same story scores of times. He proudly proclaimed himself a Radical-Socialist of the 1789 brand, *vrai républicain*, impregnated with the spirit of the glorious revolution in which one of his ancestors was a citizen-executioner. The memories of the past filled him with pride, while the unheroic present brought the blush of shame to his cheeks. One of his favourite grievances was that an important street of Arles had been named after André Tardieu, a reactionary to the core; and, to make things even worse, that street ran straight into the Place Voltaire.

With this opening, which was both whimsical and light, he was in the very midst of the problem. What could one expect, he asked with dramatic intensity, of opportunists like Pierre Laval, the then

Premier? Just to flaunt the capricious southern accents of his humour, he asked what one could expect of an Auvergnat? Men of the real South would be well placed at the head of the government, as they were known for their solid republicanism and loyalty to the Revolution. But the dullards of Paris could be counted upon to miss the opportunity of looking for a political genius in a modest restaurant of Arles. At these words, Paul's dark skin became suffused with a deeper hue, as he took this for a reference to his ambitions to qualify as a municipal counsellor, while in reality Pierre Dupont simply meant himself. Dupont insisted that the country needed a new set of leaders, and he drained his glass of Sauterne with thoughtful grace, his innocent glance registering wonder that his audience did not burst into applause.

Undaunted, he proceeded with his monologue. He feared that the age of giants was over for France and the country was falling into the mediocrity of everyday. Meanwhile the enemy was massing his forces on the French frontiers. Italy pursued the policy of peaceful penetration through her settlers in the French South, who will rise against their adopted country when Mussolini's fascist armies appear in their midst. As to the German *'itlère*, he was the worst danger France has faced in her millennial history, since his poisonous political concoction appealed to a brainless and spineless generation, hypnotized by the promise of a spurious good life for all.

Paul interrupted Dupont to say that, according to his information, half a million German bicyclists were massed near the frontiers of Alsace-Lorraine,

waiting for the signal to invade France. Dupont silenced him with a reproving glance, indicating that when a man of prominence spoke the rest of mankind should keep quiet in dumb amazement.

Several guests had ambled into the restaurant. A weather-beaten farmer of Maussane, who had come to town to sell a few head of cattle, felt impelled to say that the world was going to the dogs because industrial products were high-priced while farm products were low, and he wanted to know why the big capitalists of the North should be allowed to get away with their plot. He told the oft-told tale of the southern peasants, whom economic depression and the lure of the city were driving to ruin. One of his two sons, who had helped him in the fields, had already left for Lyons, where a silk factory offered an easy life. The other one has already begun to hint that for an ambitious young man Paris was the only fit place to live. Soon he will be left alone with his cows, forced to sell his land to an Italian.

An older peasant, whom the others called Père Jacques, joined the conversation with Southern gusto. Like his neighbours, he had a surprisingly rich vocabulary, polished in the course of numerous political talks with *Monsieur le Député* in the village tavern. He had the articulate views of the man who not only talked politics but also read the editorials of the *Petit Provençal*. In other countries, peasants of his type would have repeated the counters of small talk, but Père Jacques was a French peasant, a man of the Midi, where a clear air conduces to clear thinking and imagination is allowed to roam.

"Yes, monsieur," he began, and left time for

his words to sink in, "there is dissatisfaction in France because we are a nation of individuals in a standardized world."

This sounded like good common sense, recognized as such by the approving glances of M. Dupont and Paul.

"Our trouble is," Père Jacques continued, "that we want to have two incompatible things: to be left alone and to be helped by the government, and we are unhappy because the two cannot be reconciled. Individualism is good for freedom, but standardization helps the pocket-book. We value both, and so the clash results. In a country where people like ourselves are used to think for themselves, it is difficult to apply the straitjacket of standardization. We are not a goosestepping nation and we prefer to muddle along with our inefficient and dishonest officials, rather than exchange them for honest and efficient tyrants, to muzzle us and outlaw these harmless tavern talks. In France, where nearly everyone has his own taste and tries to live his own life, it is hard for standardization to assert itself.

"We cannot be like the rest of the world because our patriotism is an exclusive one. We consider France a privileged soil on which the type of national feeling thrives which makes us resist the internationalism of the capitalists and of the fascists. Don't forget that both of them are internationalists. Our own munition-makers help Germany to arm while trying to stir us up against the Germans, so as to increase their profits. If you doubt that such a thing is possible, read the newspapers financed by the *munitionnaires*. Their designs are dark and their

ways devious, but they know what they want and have no scruples.

"As to the fascists, they claim to worship the nation while in reality they worship their own intolerance, which knows no boundaries. The Germans of *'itlère*, who say they are better patriots than any other Germans, try to make our Alsatians and Bretons join their universal society of Germandom. Fascist Italy is trying to penetrate the East and extend its rule to other continents. It has inherited the universal idea from ancient Rome."

The lips of Père Jacques were getting dry and he wetted them with a glass of cider. A young man in a redingote utilized this chance to take the spotlight from him. He was Maître Cazes, a local lawyer, a member of the municipal council and a candidate for the Chamber of Deputies.

"Père Jacques is right," he began with a polite bow to the old man who was wiping his lips. "Our great problem is how to harmonize our individualism with the collective spirit of the age. We French people occupy a special position as we live on an island of culture in the midst of a world that is struggling to acquire a barbarism of its own. We are the only independent nation on the Continent. Our isolation is due to the fact that we believe in progress. Since we think we are far ahead of others we don't want to mix with them, for we believe they would drag us into the swamp in which they are floundering.

"We are independent because the government is not our master, as it is even in such a democratic country as England, but our slave. We believe in

keeping our public servants on the leash. This would result in chaos if we had not an innate sense of order. Our independence is an essential condition of our happiness. Despite the horror we saw in the World War, where else can you find so many smiling faces?"

"True enough," Père Jacques shouted with some heat, so as to attract attention, but the young lawyer was not ready to yield the floor. Obviously, talking was a sensual pleasure for both of them, which they enjoyed to the utmost. They found particular pleasure in their polished phrases, which could be transplanted bodily into print, and both of them derived inspiration from the attentive audience.

"Look at the map of our country," Maître Cazes shouted, indicating the wall, on which there was no map. "You can't appreciate our position unless you look at the map. We are isolated from the world on all sides, except in the north and north-east. The ocean, the Mediterranean, the Alps, the Pyrenees and the Jura Mountains are the sentinels of our country. Our neighbour to the north is a friendly nation, Belgium, a large part of which is related to us by blood and language. But our great problem is the north-east—Germany, which is a negation of all we stand for. Sometimes it seems to me as if the Germans had evolved their national character just to spite us, because they are the very reverse of what we are. Hence our obsession of *l'Allemagne* and their hatred of us.

"The situation along our most vulnerable frontier has helped to accentuate our character and influenced our attitude towards the government. We are a rich



and a thrifty nation; the Germans are neither rich nor thrifty. Just to quote one example: shortly after the war they went into the foreign money markets, borrowed extravagantly and built sumptuous swimming pools with the money, never for a moment worrying over how they would pay it back.

"Obsessed with the idea that they are a nation without space, the Germans want to expand and we are in their way. They look upon our country as a paradise on earth—which it is—and are convinced that it is the height of impudence for us to be so rich while their lot is bankruptcy. Because of this constant threat, our frontiers are unsafe. Our reaction is a desire to depend upon ourselves as much as possible, and the result is that we are becoming even more isolated.

"Besides, our nerves are none too good, as we are part of a shell-shocked civilization. The bad state of our nerves caused blood to flow on the Place de la Concorde in February 1934, and more blood may yet flow if our people keep on looking at politics as a pretext for spells of insanity. We are probably over-political, because we are over-differentiated and over-articulate. Politics is our great national game and we indulge in it in a way that is contrary to its nature as a free-for-all game.

"What is the way out? Some foreign and domestic observers think that we are headed for fascism. Are they right? Will the excesses of politics force us to fall into the arms of a French Mussolini or Hitler? And above all, can we remain a democracy even though our principal neighbours are fascists?

"I believe that we would run counter to our own

## MILLIONS OF DICTATORS

nature if we were to go fascist. I also believe that a nation's first duty is to remain itself. But we should not be ourselves if we were to join the goosestep parade, nor if we blew up our Chamber of Deputies. While many of our countrymen are angry with the Chamber, we cannot part company with it, as it is the reflection of our own selves. Whatever else may be said against our Deputies, they are watching closely the shifts of public opinion. If a few nations have decided to run amok while cementing their nationalism, that is no reason why we too should want to run amok. Besides, we became a nation centuries ago.

"I also discount the talk about our going bolshevist in the near future. France will be the last country in Europe to go communist. We are typical small-capitalists and even our socialists would think twice before trying to put their theories into practice. I don't speak about the French communists, who are fanatic followers of Moscow. On the whole, we are holding up fairly well under the impact of the Right and Left collectivism. Our individualism may be the best instrument of twentieth-century civilization, and by adhering to it we may be recognized as the saviours of mankind's superior values."

He ended his harangue with a flourish and the guests gave him a glance of approval. M. Dupont and I left the restaurant for a walk along the Rhône. Across the railway bridge an asthmatic locomotive was dragging a string of toy-like freight cars, and a small boat made puffingly for the Entrepôt des Douanes near the Faubourg de Trinquetailles, on the other side of the river.

## A FRENCH DICTATOR

Peace was written all over the countryside—on the ancient portal of St. Trophime and on the shining cannons in front of the Musée Arlatan. A couple of old men rose from their benches in the park and moved to the other side of the gravelled path, in search of the sun, the rays of which gave the grass of vivid emerald a setting of pure gold. A big car of foreign make drove up to the nearby hotel and brought life into its elegant somnolence. A few Arlesiennes walked by, wearing the characteristic dress of the region. What a pity it would be if this country were regimented and its people were made to extend their arm in the fascist salute! The French are right to deplore the tendency towards standardization. Their country ought to be retained as a reservation for the last free men to live a life according to their own lights.

## THE RIGHT WING SPEAKS UP

M. FOUCHERON'S flat was a reliquary of the *ancien régime*. The moth-eaten plush furniture paraded its faded elegance in the traditional manner of Louis XV imitations. The *fleur-de-lys* of the curtain hangings loudly proclaimed the political religion of the tenant. The portrait of the Count of Paris decorated the wall between the bay window and the chimneypiece. His coquette *barbichon* and well-tailored cutaway were shown to best advantage on the coloured print. The place of honour of the salon, facing the windows, was occupied by the life-size picture of the lamented King Charles X, sainted by the intransigence of his impeccably Bourbon temper. In M. Foucheron's eyes he was the last anointed representative of legitimacy and the patron saint of the long-departed golden age.

The open shelves were weighted with the ponderous volumes of Barras, Bainville, Daudet and Maurras, some of which were bound in ageing white, ravaged by the dust and the sun's playful rays, which flooded the room. The album on the table was divided into two parts, the first of which contained reproductions of the life at Versailles as seen by Watteau and his contemporaries and the other one contained pictures

of Henri Foucheron—and his family—who achieved a certain local notoriety under Louis XVI as the chief assistant to the tithe collector in the town of Orléans. It may have been no accident that this pride of the family died in 1831, shortly after the accession of Louis Philippe to the throne. Even though a Bourbon, the bourgeois King was too democratic to suit the taste of the Fouchérons.

The air of the salon was saturated with the odour of patchouli, which the Fouchérons held in great esteem as the official perfume of the late French monarchy. By using it in their rooms and on their persons they expressed their protest against the Third Republic.

It will be seen that M. François Xavier Foucheron Sr. was a royalist, like many little men in France, who try to escape from the drab everyday into the glittering irreality of the past. His son was a member of the Croix de Feu, of which more will be said anon.

Foucheron *père* was an appraiser in the municipal pawnshop, which had been in private hands before. The change of ownership is no unimportant detail if one wants to understand the working of M. Foucheron's mind. At the time the city acquired the pawnshop he seriously considered giving up his position. He explained to his wife that by remaining under the municipality he would tacitly recognize the legality of the Third Republic. It took Mme. Foucheron many evenings to demonstrate to her husband the inconsistency of being consistent, and she finally carried the day by assuring him in no uncertain accents that his resignation would make her leave his bed and board. M. Foucheron finally

compromised with his conscience by declaring that, under the laws of the old kingdom, the purchase of the pawnshop was illegal, and therefore he would continue under the old management. Nevertheless, he drew his salary from the city without protest.

Persons unfamiliar with M. Foucheron's mentality might be misled into believing that something was wrong with him. Such a conclusion would be unfounded, as M. Foucheron's mind was well balanced and the contrary impression was due merely to his patriotism. He was an old-fashioned Frenchman who carried logic to its illogical conclusion and refused to believe that anything he liked had a right to change. As he was not on speaking terms with the republic, he recognized the monarchy as the only legal power.

To a non-political mind his interest in royalism may have appeared an obsession, while in reality it was nothing more than an atavistic loyalty. He had been brought up in the veneration of France's erstwhile monarchs. One does not need to be an aristocrat to have such a background in the French Republic. His early days were spent in contemplation of the horrors of the Paris Commune, which he and his parents witnessed from the safe distance of Orléans. His father recollected having seen the balloon in which M. Gambetta made his escape from the besieged capital.

Although M. Foucheron's stories of the Commune were third-hand, they were nonetheless vivid, and as years went by they put on more colour. He took delight in describing the details of the horror when the rabble of the Faubourg St. Antoine set the torch

to the City Hall of Paris. In his imagination he saw the end of the magnificent Tuileries, the mob's attack on the Invalides and on other treasures of old France. He gave praise to God that they were prevented from laying their hands on the glories of Versailles. As long as that monument of royalty stood in its magnificent aloofness he was convinced that it was destined to shelter the grandeur that had been Louis XIV's.

Foucheron *père* was old enough to remember the "disgraceful" acts of Jules Ferry, who worked against the old order with the Satanic force of a true republican. The separation of Church and State was the devil's work, in M. Foucheron's eyes, but it gave him some pleasure by confirming his worst opinion of the republic. He was glad to announce at the family table that, in his view, the masters of the republic had less intelligence than the simplest *monsieur le curé*. He added with a chuckle that French traditionalism was too strong for the faith-wreckers and that Catholicism was only biding its time.

For the last thirty years he has been waiting the inevitable end of the Régime of Disgrace and the triumphant return of the Bourbons. He organized the royalists of the Quartier St. Euverte of his native Orléans in order to hasten the coming of the day. A retired *sous-préfet* added glory to the organization and Foucheron *père* was never tired of holding him up as the living symbol of French vitality. On the anniversaries of the raising of the siege of Orléans by the Virgin Joan, M. Foucheron headed the small group of his followers in the procession from the Cathedral to the Church of St. Paul. He venerated

the Maid of Orléans not for what she had done for the country but for her rôle in saving the king.

Like most good royalists, M. Foucheron derived his spiritual nourishment largely from *L'Action Française*, which he liked to quote in confirmation of his statements about the moral bankruptcy of the republic. From that paper he had learned that the country was in the hands of a gang of freemasons, communists and Jews, and he was proud of the fine distinction he made between good and bad Jews, the former of whom were contributors to the royalist party chest. He was also proud of his lack of prejudice against race, as long as the Senegalese or Indo-Chinese could be induced to help his cause.

"Why do you think the republic has failed and royalism will succeed?" I asked.

"Because this is the republic of swindlers and embezzlers," he answered. "*L'Affaire Stavisky, voilà la république!* Could such a scandal happen in a civilized country? That man Stavisky was a Russian, a *méteque*"—at this word M. Foucheron's lips curled up with contempt—"and yet the entire republic was at his feet. He entertained high police officials, ambassadors, even cabinet members. He hobnobbed with the judges who should have sent him to the gallows . . ."

"Why to the gallows, cher monsieur? He didn't kill . . ."

M. Foucheron had no patience with such technicalities.

"He must surely have killed, in a republic like this. It is logical to assume that. You ask why the monarchists did nothing about him? *Que voulez-*



vous, monsieur? We should have been powerless against him even if we had known about his machinations. They would have muzzled and exterminated us."

He repeated with emphasis:

*"Stavisky, c'est la France républicaine."*

There our conversation rested, as M. Foucheron's midday rest was over and he liked to have ample time to walk to his pawnshop with unhurried dignity. He had promised to introduce me to his son and I accompanied him to a corner café, where M. Foucheron Jr. was having his after-lunch siesta. On the way there, the father warned me that his son had a large collection of wrong ideas.

"In other words, he isn't a monarchist," I guessed.

"I wouldn't go as far as that," he countered with some hesitation. "He is young and wants to learn, but I warn you against his wrong ideas."

The younger Foucheron turned out to be a pleasant young man. A miniature skull in his buttonhole betrayed his affiliation with the Croix de Feu, which had grown out of a war veteran organization into a movement which its proponents exalted as the most potent instrument of French regeneration. Although young Foucheron had not been in the war, he joined the "Cross of Fire" because he believed in its aims.

M. Foucheron Jr. was in the employment of a wine merchant. He had wanted to take a job with an automobile firm specializing in small cars, but later he changed his mind. His father was delighted with his son's second thought, as he would have loathed the idea of a Foucheron selling a product

that had been invented under the republic. Family tradition was strongly in favour of wine.

While Foucheron *fits* was not a monarchist, he could not disguise a certain sentimental attachment to the Bourbon cause. At the same time, he realized that the royalists were not strong enough to change the course of history. In many ways he was a typical exponent of the modern Right Wing in France. He had been stirred to action by what he called the slothfulness of the republic. Without professing too much admiration for Mussolini and Hitler, he had a certain respect for their movements. He praised them for being magnetic and keeping their nations from falling into lethargy. He considered inaction worse than death, and action the essence of life.

In the course of our conversation he developed the idea that France was in danger of being swamped by more virile nations. The complacency of the small bourgeois dismayed him. This was a restless age, and those who failed to sense its rhythm could have no hope of getting ahead.

Was this a movement for the sake of movement?

"Decidedly not," Foucheron *fits* answered. "People call us trouble-makers, reactionaries and fascists. The truth of it is that our movement is revolutionary. People ask why we want to change the conditions of life. They say that France is not in the same position as Italy and Germany. Ours is not a frustrated country with inferiority complexes. We have won the war, our credit stands high and our national honour is unimpaired. We have most of the things we want and therefore we are told to keep quiet and be happy with the things we have. These

critics tell us that a Frenchman should be a conservative.

"This would be good advice if our world were static, which it is not. It is a dynamic world, one of endless fight. This is also the meaning of the post-war era, which we French must learn. In the good old days, work for the Frenchman used to be a teaser for leisure, which was supposed to be the object of life. If we worked well, it was not because we were industrious but because we were epicures. We learned that the attraction of leisure was its contrast, work. A man who gazes at flowers forever loses his sense of joy in them, and a man on a never-ending holiday has no holiday.

"Besides, our nation is blessed with a certain amount of logical thinking, one aspect of which is harmony. Our delight in harmony gives us gusto for artistic creation, which is our national type of work. We have never taken a fancy to factory labour, because of its lack of æsthetic needs.

"The idea of fight, instead of beauty, which monopolizes our life, was not a French idea. We didn't like the war and yet we won it. We don't like this after-war World War, in which mankind is presently engaged, but we must win it. This means that in a way we must change our nature and give up our cherished ideals of æsthetic supremacy, so that we may keep step with the world. Nay, we want more—we want to lead the world. We who advocate this change are revolutionaries."

"Do you mean to say that pugnacity of Italian fascism and German nazism is your aim?"

"I mean that the Germans will crush us if we are

not on our guard, after they have cast off their republican lethargy and torn the Treaty of Versailles to pieces. I also mean that Il Duce can make his indolent Italians die like heroes if he pleases to send them to battle. The Hitlerites think they have a legitimate grievance and try to remedy it by mass hysteria. While the Italians have no real grievance, they needed someone to cure them of their laziness, inefficiency and dishonesty—if Signor Mussolini is right in saying that his countrymen had all these excellent qualities.

“France needs no change of régime for these reasons, but she cannot ignore the existence of Hitlerism and Mussolinism. We are notoriously individualistic and chaos is sacred to us, since it bears the imprint of liberty, but the communists are about to exploit this national trait by organizing chaos, and this is one of the things the Croix de Feu wants to prevent.

“True enough, our movement wants to deprive us of something which is recognized as typically French—our easy-going life. It wants to instil heroic ambitions into us. This means regimentation to a certain extent, but it also serves the purpose of bringing us into line with the rest of the world and stealing the communist thunder.”

“But your leader, Colonel de la Rocque, has never announced his programme,” I objected. “He speaks vaguely about order, family and fatherland, and threatens parliament with a long vacation. Evidently he lacks the courage to tell his followers that he wants to rule without a parliament. Can you trust such a man to accomplish the French renaissance?”

"Many members of the Croix de Feu are no admirers of the Colonel," the younger Foucheron answered, "although they like his idea of a closely-knit and anti-chaos movement. This also shows that we are not fascists, since we are not hero-worshippers.

"I admit that the Colonel has not invented a startling political formula, but we would have no use for it if he had. You must admit that the most successful political movements are based not on original thoughts but on primitive sentiments. The Croix de Feu stands simply for order and authority. The typical Frenchman considers both of them evils, and he loves anarchism. We think that we can take care of ourselves and don't need the State to watch our steps. But we must carry through this temporary adjustment if the French spirit is to live."

He said *esprit français*, which means a multitude of things, depending upon one's party allegiance. I asked him what he meant.

"It is much easier to say what it doesn't mean," he answered. "It doesn't mean, for instance, the French spirit as understood by the *libéraux-communisants*—communistically inclined liberals like Herriot, who think that the French genius can be compressed into the one idea of revolution. I am just as much appalled by their conception of lawless revolution as my father is. Our revolution is law and order, harmony and symmetry.

"I know that this sounds too vague, and I'll elaborate the thought. Do you think for a moment that this world would be the same without the French? Do you think that civilization would have reached

its present stage without our active help? First of all, try to visualize a world without the English, Germans, and Italians. England is given credit for the parliamentary system, but Iceland had a parliament long before England. It is true that the Germans accomplished prodigies of industry, but it is also true that they nullified the result by prodigies of arrogance. Taking a long-range view, Germany merely perpetuated the savage instincts of the East, and is trying to give the world a Prussianized form of Slavic tyranny. As to the Italians, they gave the world dazzling performances of individual genius, but Italy gave the world chaos. Their inefficiency and corruption were proverbial.

"And now what have we done for the world? We are given credit for being gay and uninhibited, but that isn't our greatest virtue. Our great contribution to civilization is that we have taught the world how to live. All the world goes to Paris to enjoy life at its highest. Foreigners tell us that in their own countries they merely vegetate and slave, while in France they live. We have made blunders, and we could have done much better, but the world would be less civilized if it had not been for France. This is my conception of the French *esprit*.

"But France has contributed more than that to man's common stock of spiritual treasures. It was our sense of order that inspired the world with the national idea which dominates our lives to-day. You have probably read Sieburg's book, *Is God a Frenchman?* I don't like it, because its author flaunts an acquired Gallic wit in a heavy-footed Teutonic way, but I admit that he is right in saying that our

Joan of Arc was the first practical statesman to conceive the national idea and act according to its dictates. There is significance in the fact that such a tremendous idea should have been proclaimed by a simple peasant girl of seventeen.

"I know enough of history to realize that in no other country could such a slip of a girl become the bearer of the greatest national contribution to history. England's great breaks with the past originated in the brains of kings, and of those tyrants who modestly call themselves prime ministers. Germany's great changes were accomplished by Prussian Junkers. Italy's great thoughts were conceived in monasteries and in the shadow of princely courts. We in France date our conscious national life from the day when a strange vision came to a young girl in a peasant shack. Joan of Arc is a symbol of the French system of concentrated national life, made to order and individualized."

I was beginning to feel anxious for M. Foucheron's time, but he considered it his duty to enlighten the seeker of knowledge and went on:

"As you know, I dislike our so-called Great Revolution, and yet"—lowering his voice to a whisper—"I think it expressed our brand of order, although it did so in a baroquely distorted way. My father would disown me if I suggested to him that Robespierre represented a justified reaction to the violence which the system of Louis XIV had committed on the sense of order of the French nation.

"The old order had been the guardian of a handful of people, while the revolution enriched our country with the idea of *laissez-faire*. Although it did this in

a sadistic way, it placed man in the centre of the universe, and brought some order into the social chaos. After the rule of kings and feudal lords it was now the turn of the little man to show his mettle."

"But if you recognize the merits of the Great Revolution," I asked, "why do you deny those of the Third Republic, which is its offspring?"

"Because," he answered, "the republic has become the nursery of sybarites, *fainéants*, good-for-nothings, whose worthless leaders are usurping the power of a king. The politician of to-day is omnipotent, while the rest of France is merely voting cattle.

"We are supposed to be strong. Our frontiers are well protected. On our 14th of July national holiday I was myself impressed by our air fleet. But presently some doubts began to disturb me. Fortifications, tanks and aeroplanes cannot protect us from disaster. It is nature's law that the stronger swallows up the weaker, and strength is not measured by the amount of money you put into military defences, but by a country's morale.

"Germany is a vast barrack with Prussian sergeants imposing their will upon millions of others who would like to become sergeants. Herr Hitler had tears in his eyes when he told the Reichstag of his love of peace, but his book tells an entirely different story. There he tells the world that France is the real enemy of Nazi Germany.

"He plays a pastoral on his flute only until his country is ready, and then he will blow the bugles. Germany will attack us as soon as she makes up for lost time. The leader of the Croix de Feu wants



to make France danger-conscious. This is the most important point of our foreign policy.

"Can you expect a more explicit programme? For us it is sufficient. We are not Germans who are used to being ordered about. We don't want to be ruled by monomaniacal statesmen. Life is not an unchanging affair, always calling for identical reactions. It is endless change, of which the real statesman takes advantage according to the call of the moment. The only fundamental law is order, and it is this law that Colonel de la Rocque stresses, knowing that France faces ruin if it is left out of account."

Young Foucheron reached for his hat, let me pay his bill, smiled contentedly and indicated with a polite *voilà* that the interview was over. He jumped on a street-car which passed before the café. He did so in violation of a city ordinance, and the policeman at the corner whistled for him to get off. But M. Foucheron pretended not to hear the whistle and the policeman did not press the point.

## VI

### THE LEFT WING STATES ITS CASE

CAMARADE JACQUES had just finished work in the factory of the Rue Félix Faure of Saint Denis. His checkered linen cap was pulled over his right eye, leaving the front locks of his chestnut hair open to summer breezes. The fringed end of his shawl, which he wore in all seasons, was tucked into his belt. The high collar of his blouse was *à la Russe* to indicate his political faith and a crumpled issue of *L'Humanité* was peeping out of his left coat pocket.

Towards the south, where the Eiffel Tower pointed a threatening finger at the sky, it was clearing, while the air of St. Denis was still thick with the odour of freshly fallen rain. The open-air market near the Basilica was a symphony of discordant sounds, the *leitmotif* of which was the piping tunes of the *escargot* hucksters.

"*Voyez donc, madame . . .*" a fat street-merchant invited a prospective buyer of carrots.

"*Mais, monsieur l'agent!*" a huckster expostulated with a policeman who insisted that she had exceeded her allotted space and threatened to draw up a *procès-verbal*.

An elderly man, who must have seen better days,

stealthily counted his francs as he passed a butcher's shop. He started on his way, then returned hesitatingly and disappeared into the store. A woman with a hat that may have been the height of fashion a decade ago looked around with the disdainful glance of a social snob, bought the cheapest fish and hurried away.

Would Camarade Jacques give me the pleasure of his company for *l'heure d'apéritif*? I asked. But he rejected the offer with a touch of resentment, his voice indicating his belief that he considered my invitation a disguised attempt of our corrupt capitalistic society to divert him from the path of communistic virtue. But he was willing to take me to the Maison du Travail, where he expected to meet some of his fellow-militants. At the Maison a round-table conference was improvised, with me in the rôle of the cross-examiner and devil's advocate. I wanted to find out what the extreme Left Wing of France thought about its relations with the government and State.

"Are all of you communists?" I asked Jacques.

His friends corrected me: "We are militant communists."

Around a table covered with a cloth of peeling chintz about half a dozen of them sat. All but one of them were young. An elderly-looking man half-turned towards the wall, pretending to read a paper. Although the day was comfortably warm, he wore a threadbare overcoat. Heavy lids shaded his blood-shot eyes, and fatigue was written on his face.

The presence of an outsider put the young men on their guard and they eyed me with some suspicion.

After brief preliminary courtesies they were ready for the verbal duel.

"As militant communists," I asked, "what do you hope to accomplish in a country of small bourgeois?"

A touch of recrimination in my voice made them assume a hostile attitude. The elderly man feigned not to listen to our conversation.

"Monsieur," Jacques began with hardly concealed contempt for ignorance so colossal. The word "monsieur" was evidently meant as an insult.

"Monsieur," Jacques continued, "this world is full of fallacious clichés. One of them is that the English are born gentlemen, the Germans are born soldiers, and the French are small bourgeois even before they are born. Such clichés are given wide publicity by the press. It is true that about a century ago France was developing into a country of small bourgeois. . . . But the word 'bourgeois' was synonymous then with revolutionary, a man opposed to oppressive feudal aristocracy."

"*Tu te trompes*," one of the young men, who had been lying in wait for a chance to speak, interrupted Jacques. He looked like a representative of the extreme Left in the group, and his aggressive attitude suggested that he considered the very presence of a bourgeois-looking inquirer an insult to the class-conscious proletariat.

"You are mistaken," he said, "*then* they were proletarians, but did not know it. The *sans-culottes* were real revolutionaries, proud of their poverty. They were . . ."

"*Tais-toi*," Jacques interrupted him sternly. "This monsieur is not interested in subtle nuances. He has

come here with the common prejudice of all of them, thinking that France is the country of the small capitalists, which is not so.

"People tell such wonderful stories about the Frenchman with the well-filled stocking, who earns a life of leisure at sixty! This is propaganda. Frenchmen are not like that. The average Frenchman is like us, a proletarian, who doesn't know what may happen to him from one day to the other.

"My comrade Lucien and I work in an automobile factory. That man over there is a furrier, and the others are mechanics. Until the crisis came they had work on and off; they were terribly underpaid—all of us were—but at least we were not idle. Three of them were out of work for months; I was idle for nearly a year, and now I am on part time. There are millions like us, sure only of the uncertainty of to-morrow. Do you call us bourgeois?"

"The French are thrifty," Lucien continued, "because they have made a virtue out of necessity. They can manage to live on a pittance, and they know how to plan. If they get twenty francs a day they'll set a part aside for a rainy day. Last year I had to manage sometimes with as little as 150 francs a month. We have always been exploited; we are used to living on crusts. Are we therefore bourgeois?"

A third young man spoke up. He was chewing the butt end of an extinct cigarette and at the same time correcting a sheet of proof. He turned out to be the editor of a communist factory paper, and he had a way of dropping into pompous French:

"Outsiders believe our peasants are prosperous.

## MILLIONS OF DICTATORS

They hear of thousands of litres of good wine being poured into the Loire and think that is a sign of prosperity. They don't know that those wine-pouring peasants try to make both ends meet by living on their small savings. I know of a peasant family in the Cher-et-Loire department which makes two hundred francs a month, and every member of the family is at work. They live a primitive life. Food costs them little. They barter their potatoes for the neighbour's wheat and pay the miller with wine. They have been reduced to the necessity of weaving their own cloth.

"I've covered Europe from end to end, as I wanted to see how our comrades live in foreign lands. I have gone among the peasants and know that our peasants have nothing to boast about. They are a little more clever, perhaps, in budgeting their needs, and that's where they got their reputation as bourgeois."

The point settled, they lapsed into momentary silence. The next question was a thorny one, and I addressed it to Jacques:

"What is your communism? Is it a co-operative organization for the self-help of the needy, or has it a higher social aim in view?"

While Jacques meditated whether the question deserved to be answered, the elderly man in the threadbare coat began to speak:

"Monsieur's question is justified. Many so-called communists don't dare to face this fundamental fact. Many of them have joined the party out of intellectual snobbishness, as they are always on the trail of the latest idea. Not a few among them are calculating politicians in embryo, counting upon the fat rewards

of membership in a young movement. But most of them are poor devils, ashamed to admit that they are trying to help themselves.

"Most of us are hypocrites, who say that we only want to help humanity. We are supposed to be the heaven . . . We are the modern Prometheuses from whom the powers-that-be steal their thunders. But many of our comrades seem to have forgotten that they, too, are part of mankind which they profess to love. Did Lenin ever say that bolshevism is a charitable organization of spineless revolutionaries too timid to wish to help themselves? Did Marx teach that communism was an anæmic offspring of Christianity, a religion of goodwill and love to all?"

His eyes were red and his hands were in a nervous quiver. While he emptied his cup of coffee, Lucien whispered into my ear:

"He got the chills in the tropics . . . Working for the party."

The elderly man overheard Lucien's remark and turned on him with some heat:

"And you want to make me feel like an idiot on account of that—a martyr sacrificing his health and life for a noble cause. Suppose I'd tell you that I wanted to get out of France . . . far from here . . . because of a love affair . . . now forgotten. Would you say that in that case I was not a good communist? Am I now a bourgeois?"

"No, comrades, we are neither martyrs nor bourgeois. We are communists because of the great injustice of the life we live. We are selfish and that's what we should be. If everyone understood

his own interests there would be no capitalistic exploitation. I tell you that this world will be a fit place for men only after it has been purged of brotherly-lovers and self-sacrificers. Communism is the creed of healthy self-interest—it is real and therefore honest.

“We also fool ourselves by professing internationalism. Are we really internationalists? How many of the French Communists have ever gone outside of France? You say that they have neither the money nor the leisure. How many of them would go abroad to see conditions for themselves if they had the choice between that and a glorious time on our own French Riviera?

“To most of us here, in the neighbourhood of the capital, there is Paris and then there is France, followed by that vague *là-bas*, which means the rest of the world.

“Do we get a training in becoming internationalists by looking at the foreigners who come to us? There are many of them . . . hundreds of thousands each year. They are nice people, who get drunk and have their eyes on wicked things. They return home disappointed, since they know all our tricks and even more.

“In short, our mentality is individualist and to a certain extent even capitalistic, with the difference that we don’t believe in a capitalism which gets fat on the sweat of the little fellow. Under a better social system, when we shan’t have to fight for our daily bread, we will fight for more idealism in our life. The difference between capitalism and real communism should be the difference between an



aimlessly rambling past and a future with a goal. The vicious circle of working to eat and eating so that we may work cannot be the object of an ideal society. When the time comes we'll free ourselves of our communistic money-mindedness and take a plunge into collective-mindedness.

"Meanwhile our comrades are persecuted, while the governments emasculate our programme and try to stay the inevitable by putting parts of it into practice. The time will come when the nations of the world wake up and realize that such half-hearted measures do no good and that the pure Marxian programme offers the only way to a life worthy of human beings."

A coughing spell interrupted his talk, and the others looked at him with sympathy.

Three workingmen with the ageless look of factory slaves entered the room, and one of them told the attendant to bring them three *cassis à l'eau*. He did this with the bravado of a man who has made up his mind to be extravagant. To show what he meant, he planked down a small fistful of coins on the peeling chintz of the tablecloth.

"*Eh, bien, les copains*," he began buoyantly, and the three of them clinked glasses. "If the *patrons* don't accept our conditions, the strike begins next Monday."

"*C'est entendu*," the two others answered.

"*Voilà, Charles*," Lucien exclaimed. "Come here, pal, and bring along your comrades. This monsieur wants to know all about our movement. By the way, where have you been all this time? Is it true that you had been expelled?"

"It's true, Comrade Lucien," Charles answered with a triumphant smile. "They discovered that my poor mother was a Belgian and shipped me out of the country as a troublesome alien. *Imaginez-vous*, my father was a Frenchman, an Auvergnat, as dark as that great Patriot, Pierre Laval, our not-so-beloved Premier. Since my father was a Frenchman, I am one, too, *n'est-ce pas?* What has all this to do with my mother's nationality? Then they tried to cast aspersions on her, and convince me that I was an illegitimate son and a Belgian. They sent me across the frontier, but I convinced the Belgians that I am a really dangerous communist, which made them believe my word that I am not a Belgian. So they proved to the French that I am a Frenchman and—*me voilà*, here I am."

"Do you see, monsieur?" Lucien turned to me. "These are democracy's ways. If they can't kick you out legally, they do it illegally."

This set our conversation on the question of democracy versus fascism. "Is not the choice of France between the two?" I asked.

"No, monsieur," Lucien answered, "the choice is between fascism and communism. The story of our Comrade Charles proves the point. France is already a fascist country, otherwise they could not have done with him what they did. He was a good worker, popular with his fellow-slaves, but not so popular with his employers, who discovered that he was a thinking man and therefore potentially dangerous. He was dangerous indeed to them, as he is an old hand and knows how much the bosses make and how little the labourers get. He was not a man to

## THE LEFT WING STATES ITS CASE

keep this information to himself. . . . He had left the socialists because he thought they were pussy-footing."

One of the men who had come with Charles interrupted Lucien:

"He put up the question to us. I still remember when he asked us: 'What do you call the man who holds you up with a revolver and demands your money or takes your life? The bosses are worse, because they take both.' This was what he said."

Lucien listened to him with some impatience, as he considered convivial talk a sort of football, in which he wanted to play the star rôle.

"What would Mussolini do with Charles?" he asked in a new burst of eloquence. "He would put him in a *confino*. And Hitler? He would put him in a concentration camp. In our republic we do these things with a little more courtesy, but in the real fascist spirit. We calmly declare that Charles is an illegitimate son and is therefore not entitled to breathe the air of our virtuous country. The idea of dealing with undesirables is the same and only the methods are different."

"Can you imagine France as a communistic country?" I insisted, addressing myself to all of them. "Do you think that the people of Provence are ready to give up their olive groves to a French *kolkhoz*? Do you suppose that the *vignerons* of Champagne and the Loire are ready to subordinate their will to a bureaucrat in a Paris government office? Can you imagine the fishermen of Bretagne risking their lives in the interests of a soulless co-operative venture, of

which they would be the paid employees? What would happen to your French individualism?"

It was Jacques who took up the challenge:

"The Frenchman is supposed to be a logical person. If he is logical, he cannot help seeing the sensible side of life. France was the first great European nation to break the power of feudalism after it had degenerated into an organization of wholesale robbery for the benefit of titled gangsters. From the point of view of the lord this arrangement was logical, as he had everything, but from the point of view of the serf it was illogical, as he had nothing beyond the privilege of working himself to death. This absence of logic avenged itself in the French Revolution, where the final argument was expressed by the guillotine. Whatever its enemies may say about that charitable instrument, it did express a great thought with clear-cut emphasis, although sometimes with a deplorable lack of impartiality. The idea was that the social parasites must be exterminated.

"After the passing of feudalism, France went through various stages of illogic, and settled down to a capitalistic democracy, which seemed to be a great improvement over the previous world order. It also gave a larger number of people the chance to bully their fellow-creatures. As it continued the theoretical possibility for everyone to bully and oppress his neighbour—if he was stronger—the system was hailed as just and equitable.

"It was soon discovered, however, that too much justice of this kind was unjust, because the unscrupulous go-getters ensnared the people with their moral principles. The result was the chaos of to-day.

## THE LEFT WING STATES ITS CASE

Would any honest man dare to assert now that wealth is the reward of hard work, clean life and daily prayer to God? I believe we may safely agree that it is the reward of a lack of social conscience.

"Now, therefore, if it is true that the Frenchman is accursed with logic, then he must become a communist, taking the power out of the hands of the few and entrusting it to the community.

"Our peasants ought to know by this time what it means to live under a régime of utter chaos. It was not only the World War that devastated thousands of French homes, but also what went before and came after it. As far back as man can remember, those homes have been devastated by feudalism and capitalism. Our peasants lost some four billion gold francs in Czarist Russia after they had let themselves be fooled into giving their money to the Little Father's bottomless treasury, so as to help our bankers get rid of their bad securities and help our military people obtain the services of an unreliable ally.

"Going back into more distant history, it was not the big fellows who lost their cows and houses in the gloriously criminal expeditions of Napoleon, the Mass Murderer. Nor was it they who contributed the five billion gold francs which represented the tribute of the Third Republic to Germany at the end of the Franco-Prussian War.

"If he is as logical as his reputation, the Frenchman must crave a régime under which no nation covets its neighbour's wealth and no crooked banker steals his money. Under an international régime of communism France will not be periodically devastated, as she has been heretofore.

## MILLIONS OF DICTATORS

"Using your capitalistic language to make my point clear, try to imagine a big industrial plant in the hands of a few unscrupulous pushers whose only qualifications are strong elbows and loud voices. Imagine further that in this lunatic factory there is a complete absence of co-ordination among the various departments, where every labourer does what he likes, attempting to outwit his fellow non-workers in an effort to make an easy living at their expense. You will realize that such a plant could not survive its follies.

"Yet the case of our civilization is entirely similar. We are such a crazy plant and we do such mad things. I go a step further in asserting that this kind of capitalism defeats its own purpose. It perpetuates folly by keeping people from becoming real capitalists and exposing them to never-ending dangers. Under this system only a few people can become dictators of our economic life, while the bulk strives to reach the impossible."

Jacques put up an argument for force as a means to ultimate good. He showed himself an apt pupil of his favourite author, Anatole France, whose paradoxical turn of speech he liked to imitate, and sometimes he almost lost himself in contradictions merely by chasing a happy phrase.

The men at the table formed smaller groups, and the hubbub became general. Jacques' eloquence stimulated them, and the cheap *apéritif* brought wan smiles to their careworn cheeks. The elderly man in the threadbare overcoat looked blankly into the smoke-filled air, pursuing his thoughts in silence. A taxi chauffeur ordered a *demie*, saying: "Dark, of

course," with the air of a man who expected all the world to be acquainted with his tastes. Hardly had he begun to quaff the foaming brew when, at the sight of a prospective passenger, he quickly drained his glass and resumed his place at the wheel.

"This," the elderly man murmured hoarsely, "is our civilization . . . The chauffeur comrade is afraid to lose a franc of income and deprives himself of life's pleasure because of fear. The glass of beer tells the story."

But the others were less inclined to take the incident on its tragic side. The talk, the smoke and the alcohol began to work their magic on their brains. They were talking themselves out of a dejected mood, enjoying the flow of their oft-rehearsed arguments. Now that they had convinced themselves once more of the justice of their cause they looked at themselves as pioneers and martyrs, and enjoyed their plight. Life seemed to have achieved its broader purpose and the future no longer appeared so bleak. The Frenchman's native optimism lit up the faces of these iconoclasts, who for the last hour had been trying to convince themselves that life was a hopeless muddle. The glow that suffused their cheeks made them look different. Jacques took Lucien by his arm and offered to take him to a club where young proletarian women did the honours. The elderly man drew his overcoat tighter around his angular figure and bade the company good evening with a bloodless smile. The small crowd dispersed; one could hear the voice of Charles before he turned the corner:

"The capitalists are making a great mistake . . ."

"But, monsieur," I asked Jacques before he

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drifted out of sight in the company of Lucien, "where do you think the present régime is most vulnerable? Where can you make your influence felt?"

And Jacques answered with the pleasant smile of a man in a slight daze:

"On the barricades, monsieur, on the barricades!"



GERMAN DICTATORS RECEIVE DICTATION

## VII

### THE NAZI MAKES HIS BID

THE study of national characters is a study in shifting sand. Who could say what a Frenchman is, and what a German? Every man is the reflection of his own idea of the godhead, which is never the same. Who knows but that among the desert's grains of sand there are boastful and pugnacious, modest and peaceful ones, having their own personalities, as nature moves them in its well-ordained caprice of infinite variety? Napoleon did not affect the course of cosmos more than do the dust particles dancing in the sun.

National character is something arbitrary, existing only in the imagination. But imagination may be instrumental in moulding individual character so that the unreal becomes real—more powerful, in fact, than reality. A Frenchman is not what he is but what he thinks of himself, and he will act in accordance with the conventional idea of how he should act. A German is even more likely to act according to artificial formulæ, as the urge for unity is stronger in him. Man can externalize his power only in the company or on the back of others. Julius Cæsar in tropical jungles, on the mountains of Asia, or as a lone figure on the great plains would be just

one helpless individual against nature, and his chances of survival would be slim.

In its noblest sense, nationality is personality placed at the disposal of a higher aim. But nationality, as it is currently used, is often the device of the unscrupulous to exploit the weak. The German is more apt to fall a victim to the nationality mania, as the nation-idea is new to him. The World War was the first great conflict in which all Germany fought on one side. The last great war previous to that was the Franco-Prussian War, in which national unity was but a hope.

Different ideas of nationality explain much of the difference on the two banks of the Rhine. The mother of French unity was Joan of Arc and the father of Germany unity was Bismarck. Between the lives of the two four centuries passed, fraught with momentous changes. Meanwhile Rome saw the rise of Wittenberg, and the western man's mind broadened to include two new continents. The ideals of poverty, shining on the sky of St. Francis of Assisi, yielded to the Puritan ideals of prosperity as the reward of worthy life. The religious mentality of the mediæval man yielded to the pragmatism of the trader, and the world, formerly the battlefield of ideologies, turned into a battlefield of trade rivalries. The profit motive took the place of the religious motive, and the passivity of an agricultural civilization yielded to the activity of an industrial one.

The nationalism of the Maid was romantic and religious, while that of Bismarck was commercial and military. The former was defensive, against the desecration of the native soil by alien mercenaries;

the latter was aggressive, a response to the call for trade expansion.

The rôles of the Maid of Orléans and of Prince Bismarck are typical of the nationalisms of the two countries. Without these two historic figures' help, much of the difference between the attitudes of the two peoples to their governments would remain unanswered. Although at her trial by the Holy Inquisition the Maid resented the prosecution's references to her as a shepherd girl, she actually was a young peasant woman. How the girl of Domrémy found the ancient sword of Charles Martel with which she hewed her way to victory, and how St. Michael, St. Catherine and St. Margaret conversed with her may forever remain mysteries, but there is neither mystery nor lack of meaning in her lowly origin, symbolizing the basic fact that French nationalism took roots in the deep. Richelieu, Mazarin and the other lights of the moribund *ancien régime* merely institutionalized the idea of the Maid of Orléans.

Prince Otto Eduard Leopold von Bismarck, later Duke of Lauenburg, father of the German Empire and of national unity, had a different background. Although the idea of national unity had been broached by the revolutionaries of 1848 and the Frankfurt Parliament had vainly tried to bring it to an issue, it was for the Prussian Junker aristocrat of Schönhofen to accomplish the great feat. Nationalism in Germany, unlike that of France, did not originate in its popular community-conscience, but in the will of the ruling class. History has, indeed, predisposed the German to wait for a clue from above, instead

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of generating it out of himself. His ancestors had to endure the rule of scores of petty princes.

*Und platzt ein Fass Petroleum,  
So stinkt das ganze Fürstentum.*

The rule of these princes was regional, and the idea of nation was high treason to them. They represented authority in the form of the mailed fist of the strongest. There were only sporadic attempts to give the multitude its money's worth in the form of protection. Even though they wore crowns and their retinue included scarlet-robed justices and hangmen, these rulers were nothing more than the ancestors of the modern racketeers, claiming legal right to enforce loyalty to a criminal cause.

In France such regional majesties had long before been absorbed in a united kingdom. In Germany, however, the process of absorption was prevented by geography and wars between the Empire and the Pope. Germany has open frontiers, lying athwart the transcontinental highway on which Asia swarmed into Europe. Constant raids of the East on the West kept the Teutonic lands in a state of chronic irritation and prevented the tribal units from coagulating.

When the German kings decided to exchange the reality of power for its semblance by becoming Holy Roman Emperors, the fate of these northern parts was sealed. Throughout the centuries a state of chaos prevailed there because of the battle which the spiritual and secular arms of a supposedly universal power fought for hegemony. Rome would have

been inconsistent with its own nature if she had admitted the supremacy of the sword over the cross. Although the diplomatic manœuvres of the age are largely unexplored, enough is known to see that in this warfare neither side forbore to hit below the belt. Nearly every time the emperor took a strong course, his domestic troubles increased. The princes could count upon the reward of their insubordination to the supposedly supreme master of the secular arm of a world power.

Germany had also the bad luck of being tied to the declining star of the House of Hapsburg, the members of which were Holy Roman Emperors for six centuries. This ambitious dynasty saw its rule better safeguarded by keeping down the individual German States and fomenting discord among them. This policy came to an end only when Prussia took the lead and ousted the House of Austria from its seat of might.

Germany's national awakening came with a vengeance, and, as is usual in such cases, the reaction was commensurate with the amount of lost opportunities. The Reich lacked the training-school of individualism which the French revolutions have provided. It fell from one regimented excess into another, always at a word of command from above.

It would be erroneous to say that all Germany is addicted to the goosestep. In some parts of the Reich, the French Revolution had fathered the spirit of individual freedom, which, however, was counteracted by Prussia's dominating influence. Prussia grew powerful for two principal reasons: first, because her rulers were clever enough to benefit from the

decay of the Hapsburg empire, and, second, because her uninhibited spirit of aggression was in harmony with the militaristic era into which she was born. A perfect specimen of the intolerant spirit of the age, Prussia became the object of the world's hateful admiration. While fighting Potsdam's spirit, nearly all Europe became prussianized.

The liberal republic of 1918, known as the Weimar republic, was not in the line of spiritual succession with imperial traditions and so it had to fall a prey to reaction, whether it was the National-Socialism of Adolf Hitler or the Nationalism of Alfred Hugenberg. Within a decade Germany swung from Left to Right, and from a liberal democracy reverted to military autocracy. Which will be the Reich of the future?

Observers of the fluctuating values of history will not be surprised at such changes, as they realize that in epochs of such cosmic upheavals the inconstancy of unstabilized nations has scarcely any bounds. They also realize that nations, like men, are composed of a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, who alternately stamp their characters on the country. If nations consisted of individuals with definitely made-up minds about party adherence, public opinions would be more stabilized. But individuals are vacillating even in matters of vital personal concern, not to speak of State matters, with which they are only slightly familiar. Besides, in days of stress and strain they are more easily amenable to outside influences, parading old formulæ in the guise of new ones. A magnetic personality, a pleasant voice, stirring music, a new party flag or uniform are dear to German

hearts. They also like to be wooed and give themselves with verve, transposing their desires into the traits of the Leader they want to adore.

In this connection, the difference between the modern autocrat, such as Hitler, and that of olden times also deserves a moment's reflection. The tyrant of old did not even pretend to be useful to anyone but himself and his henchmen. His government was an incorporated robber gang with no responsibilities. The story of Spartacus and of the Gracchi shows how even so-called liberal Rome repelled outside interference with her tyrannical business imperialism. But it was only under the Empire that the ruthless nature of tyranny revealed itself. A Roman tyrant like Caligula spent the public's money with monstrous lavishness, "drinking off and quaffing most precious and costly pearls dissolved in vinegar," Suetonius writes, "setting upon the board at feasts loaves of bread and other viands . . . all of gold, saying commonly withal that a man must be either frugal or Cæsar."

The modern Cæsar, on the other hand, plays up to the grandstand with his frugality. While he arranges blood-purges not less hideous than those of the imperial madman, he will plead that they are for the common weal. A dictator who openly admits that he despises the crowd would be inconceivable in Europe. The fact that he thinks his nation unworthy of self-government is, of course, an implied charge, but as long as he screens his real opinion the dictator-worshippers will abide in their faith in him.

In Germany's case the victory of National-Socialist dictatorship implies a pathological phenomenon. Adolf



## MILLIONS OF DICTATORS

Hitler came forth as the representative of the German Everyman, bent upon realizing his fondest wishes in his own deeds. He was ready to re-enact the legend of St. George and the dragon. Millions of little men without political schooling derived pleasure from performing a great deed through proxy. Many of these little men have not the political intelligence to realize that by investing one individual with arbitrary powers they are really dethroning themselves. The German who takes delight in being one of the herd merely follows the line of least resistance to fame, and admits his inability to care for himself. "I am a weakling," he concedes, "and my fist is a figment of imagination."

It would be a mistake, however, to think that the Nazi régime is what Hitler and his backers originally meant it to be. Germany's *Führer* appealed not only to the little man but also to the big fellow, and the industrialists of the Ruhr and Westphalia saw that he was a man they could rely upon. They saw that his so-called socialism was merely a bait to attract the New Deal-hungry masses. They knew that his movement could be used as a means to divert attention from the real issues, and they helped Hitler climb to the highest peaks. They were even more dishonest than he was.

And yet what has happened? In spite of his obligations to the industrial magnates Hitler has been forced towards the very kind of socialism he despises. He has been compelled to enact economic and financial legislation, which his socialist predecessors never even tried to put through. To-day the German Reich seconds bolshevist Russia in a system of State-

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controlled production and distribution. The government has full charge not only of the flow of money, but also of imports and exports; it controls factory outputs and agricultural work. It has the power to keep branches of industry closed to prospective newcomers and, in general, to keep a close watch on the trend of trade.

It was the masses who forced Hitlerism into this direction and gave National-Socialism a different aim. This is one of the most telling instances of a dictator receiving dictation from his subjects.

But Germany is not all-Nazi, and so the following chapters will deal with several aspects of public opinion in the Reich and even among the exiles. The Hitler régime can claim complete victory in muzzling the press and speech, but human thought sometimes refuses to obey the mailed fist.

\* \* \*

Johannes Fest was a National-Socialist, who believed in the Third Reich with religious fervour. He was a member of the lost generation, born a few years before the war. His childhood in the German frontier town of Passau was spent in an atmosphere of hero-worship and short potato-rations. He was thrilled with the music that accompanied the battalions, which were to perish in Northern France, to the gaily-bedecked antechamber of their mass graves—the railway station. Since he was too young to see the trenches, he thought war was a festival of music, uniforms and flags, until his father was wounded at Passchendaele, and sent home to await the end. His father's presence at home—a

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sad and broken man—belied the beauties of war as told at school and in picture books.

Being an unsophisticated boy, Johannes accepted life as it was, taking hardships for granted. Under normal conditions he would have been apprenticed to a haberdasher, become a shop assistant, married and died in due time, after having consumed an ocean of beer and mountains of good sausage. He was the kind that could be made happy with little things and his desires for romance would have been gratified by weekly visits to the neighbourhood cinema. He would have perused the columns of his paper, headed "World Events," with the mild interest of one who was not concerned. He would have fulfilled his civic duties by voting for the candidates of a middle party and would have remained a loyal subject to his Majesty the King, of the Bavarian House of Wittelsbach. In that good old world of civic somnolence Johannes would never have grasped the meanings of such words as "inflation," "devaluation," "socialization" and "autochthonous." But even though his vocabulary had not been enriched by such Latin and Greek words he would never have felt that his life was less abundant because of that.

Such a life, however, was not the lot of Johannes Fest. He was yet in his teens when he became initiated into the mysteries of currencies in the most startling way. The hundred-mark note, which in his childhood was a little fortune, had lost its value to such an extent that tens of thousands of its kind were scarcely sufficient to buy a loaf of bread.

One day the red flag was hoisted on the Rathaus, and he was told that the Socialists were at the helm.

For a few days the Communists held power, and the flag remained the same. One morning the red banner was found in the gutter, and upon the southern breeze fluttered the white-and-blue flag of the Wittelsbachs. Then the flag of the republic was hoisted, only to be replaced by the flag of the imperial Reich.

The town was charged with excitement when Munich, the Bavarian capital, flashed word of a bloody rebellion, in which the army of the republic mowed down the followers of a man called Adolf Hitler. This was in 1923, and Johannes was not yet fifteen, an apprentice in the bootery of Franz Ramesdorf in the Rinderstrasse. Like many German boys of his age and station, he already had articulate views about politics and could even tell the difference between the programmes of socialists and communists. At that time he thought Stresemann conservative and Hofrat Hugenberg a vicious reactionary. Although his ideas on politics did not shine with originality, he was voluble on *Weltanschauung* and the philosophy of life. He found as much excitement in the world events of the newspapers as he would have found in the books of Jules Verne before the war. He condemned Hitler for his abortive "Beer Hall Putsch" and was glad he had disappeared from the political scene never, as it seemed to most people then, to return to it again.

At twenty—a clerk in the same bootery—Johannes joined a young men's club of the Bavarian People's Party, where he assumed a left-wing stand. At one time he even flirted with the thought of joining the socialists, and he would have done so if their party organization had not fallen into decay in that part of Bavaria.

He was old enough to vote at the Reichstag elections of 1930, and his disappointment at the comeback of the Hitler party was keen. Then, one day, he lost his job; and, while waiting for his dole-book to be stamped as part of the ritual of receiving his weekly pittance, something snapped in him and that night he visited a small group of socialist young people. He was bitter, his good-natured resignation gone, ready to mount the barricades in defence of a cause—almost any cause—that could fill his heart with glow. But the Socialist leaders told him to keep quiet, read the party organ, the *Vorwärts*, hate the communists, despise Hitler's Nazis, and believe in better days. Although Johannes found the leaders eloquent, he could not warm up to them.

Johannes Fest might have been satisfied with the cool aloofness of the Socialist bigwigs if his desperate condition had not egged him on to try new political adventures. Like a good German, he expected collective relief for his troubles. Since the short-lived communist rule, the party of the Third International could not operate under its own name in the city, and it had to lead a camouflaged existence. Nevertheless, Johannes found the most conveniently located cell and was hoping for miracles from his new allegiance.

He liked the communist speeches, which were peppered with the strong words he admired, and he was ready more than ever to perform great deeds, so that he might be spared the humiliation of the dole line. He soon found that the speeches were mostly about the woes of the proletariat in China and kindred subjects, inspired by Moscow's preoccupations. At

first Johannes tried to get excited about the sad plight of the Chinese worker and could scarcely restrain himself from declaring a private war on the Japanese, but soon his enthusiasm gave way to a new spell of despair.

It was in that mood that he let himself be prevailed upon to attend a Hitler meeting, to which he went to jeer and not to cheer. The music was the kind he could not help liking, in spite of his association with socialists and communists. While he derided the theatricality of the evening, he could not prevent his heart from beating faster when the gates of the auditorium were thrown open and in marched a detachment of wooden soldiers in the shape of the Hitlerite brown troops, carrying a forest of flags. The suspense that ensued preluded a climax that came with Hitler's appearance on the stage.

In Hitler's words there was an emotional intensity that carried the audience away. He did not speak of China, but of their own troubles, as expressed in the plight of the fatherland. In an emotional outburst he poured out his bitterness against all that was not German. He made them hate all who were not National-Socialists, and with his words he raised them to the status of aristocrats of blood. Although he was not specific about the future, beyond saying that it would see Germany shining with glory, his attacks on the past sounded like the bugle-calls of a new age, in which all German-Aryans would live as heroes, free from the shackles of Versailles and personal privation.

Johannes Fest went home from the meeting with the idea that he had heard a first-class demagogue

who was familiar with all the tricks of the political backstage. He was ready to admit that the show was perfectly managed, and that every detail had been worked out by an unscrupulous genius pulling the wires on which the Chaplinesque *Führer* performed. But he liked the spectacle so much that he went a second and a third time. By then the insidious propaganda had penetrated his pores, and he was beginning to argue his previous allegiance out of himself. He let himself be persuaded that this was real socialism, ennobled with nationalism.

He was already convinced that the Treaty of Versailles was a monstrous injustice—even before he had known what a treaty meant or where Versailles was. But now he began to fume with rage at the work of the peacemakers and felt a sense of personal humiliation because of them. Surely, he thought, the socialists and communists should not have allowed such things to pass. At the next meeting Adolf Hitler shouted that the socialists and communists were the real authors of the Treaty of Shame. Johannes Fest answered in thought that in that case the socialists and communists were traitors, and he no longer attended their rallies.

From that time on, his patriotic grief over the Treaty of Versailles left Johannes no peace of mind. He discussed it with his comrades and lulled himself to sleep with the promise that all would be well after the great German awakening. Gradually a great change took place in him. His personal despair was submerged in the despair over the affairs of the country. He became convinced that he was a victim of the conspiracy of Jews, the French, international

finance, socialists and communists. His heart went out to Adolf Hitler in rapturous self-denial. The work of the genius of publicity who was pulling the wires of the demagogue began to make its effect felt in earnest. The pæan of praise of millions turned into hysterics. The Nazi rallies, which had been revivalist meetings, became orgies of voodoo worshippers. The barrage of propaganda made Johannes Fest lose his senses and adore the Superman, unthinkingly, unfeelingly. He did not try to rebel against this obsession.

Hitler became Chancellor of the German Reich and Johannes transferred to him all the unconsumed affection he had accumulated during his wanderings in the political wilderness. He wanted desperately to abandon himself to the thought of having a superior being watch over him; one whom, in return, he could worship. He was told that such a worshipful attitude was a sign of strength. Being happy in his loyalty, he did not realize that it was a sign of weakness. He also got his job back from Herr Ramesdorf.

We met at the Café Wittelsbach of Passau. The public square before us was a picture of uniformed animation with storm troopers, black-uniformed special guards, aviators and members of the army, the *Wehrmacht*. A group of the *Bund Deutscher Mädel* marched by, little Gretchens with plaited hair reaching down to their waists, wearing little brown jackets over white blouses. They were followed by a group of the National-Socialist *Frauenschaft*, rosy-cheeked South-German women, slightly aghast at their own temerity in thus showing themselves to the world.



Johannes was flabbergasted when confronted with the question as to why he admired Hitler so much. His honest features registered the incredulity of a man who doubts his ears. Could one help admiring the sun and the rushing mountain torrent?

"Adolf Hitler," he said, "is our *Führer* . . . you must know that he saved our country. From whom? From the Jews, communists, socialists, pacifists. He gave us our army and"—with the inspiration of a man who has just found the happy word—"and our self-confidence. Before he came we were Bavarians, Saxons, Badeners, and now we are all one nation, following one *Führer*. He wiped off the shame of Versailles."

The ice thus broken, he spoke about the Nazi movement as his personal property. He loved his uniform. He was a *Sturmmann* of the 4th. *Standarte* of the 11th. *Sturm*. He pronounced the figures slowly, so that there should be no mistake about them. He was proud of those figures. A *Truppführer* entered the café, a higher officer of the storm troopers, and Johannes jumped to his feet, clicked his heels, and his body became a stone statue for a moment. He was proud of his superior officer and of the privilege of obeying him. He would have loved to display his loyalty in some spectacular way, such as saving the life of the officer or—even better—of the *Führer* himself.

He talked fast, anxious to pour out all the enthusiasm that was in him. He spoke both of the *Führer* and the cause, but the former seemed to him more important. His devotion to Nazism was a personal one, expressed in unconditional surrender to

a personal saviour. The *Führer's* triumph was his triumph, the Leader's greatness was his greatness.

He spoke about the Jewish question, or else he would have been no Nazi. In a moment of frank confession he regretted that at one time he had misjudged the Jews because of the few specimens he had known. Now, however, he knew all about the *real* Jew (he emphasized the word) since he was a regular reader of *Der Stuermer* and had also heard its editor, Julius Streicher.

Did he realize how much German Jews have contributed to the greatness of the Reich?

At this question his face hardened and a glance of hostility stole into his eyes. He answered that the very term "German Jew" was a contradiction. A mediæval monk could not have been more attached to a dogma than Johannes Fest was to the racial dogma of the Nazis. He could not give it up without letting the entire structure of his Hitlerism collapse. Nor could he let it go without giving up his much cherished idea of racial superiority. Einstein's so-called discoveries did not amount to anything, because he was a Jew. Johannes, an Aryan member of the Nordic race, was superior to any Semite.

What was the essence of Hitlerism?

"Strength," he answered, and he invested the word with a magic of its own. It was not a means but an aim, and in this subtle distinction the difference between heresy and true faith rested. Strength was hard, like flint; the very reverse of love, which was the medium of religions. He had little use for Christianity after having heard Dr. Alfred Rosenberg, a high-priest of neo-paganism, who described Christ's religion as a

Jewish plot to make the love of the weakling the gauge of merit, while force was outlawed from the arena of life.

"What we need is will, will, will," he repeated the *Führer's* words. "It is the faith of the strong, and our Leader expresses our will, the same as we execute his will." He recognized that there was a hierarchy of will. The will of the *Führer* was supreme, and it was also infallible. "The will of the multitude gained momentum only through Hitler's sublimated will."

"Is mass-will the expression of a strong individuality?"

He did not grasp the sarcasm of the question. Will appeared to him an all-penetrating unity, effective only within the nation and for its benefit. The individual will exists only in the national will. "Common weal precedes private weal." Obviously Johannes Fest was an apt student who knew his lesson by heart.

"Through this uniform," he said, and touched his brown tunic to make it appear more real. He meant by this gesture that, by putting on the uniform, Johannes Fest lost his identity and became part of a larger unit, a nation in arms, the strength of which he assumed. It was for the German what the cowl was for the monk, denoting the renunciation of his individuality and the acceptance of a higher morality. With his uniform on, he became part of a cosmic force which made his own private world live.

Another young man in uniform—a very tall one—entered the café and went straight to Johannes. His lanky arms and legs were joined together in

such a way as to make one fear they were going to fall apart.

"My friend Hoefer," Johannes introduced him and added proudly: "He is my superior officer."

"Heil Hitler!" Hoefer saluted.

"Guten Tag," I answered.

Hoefer was a farmer's son from somewhere near Passau. His father's farm had been heavily mortgaged, so that he had to sell part of it, and there was not enough work for him and his son on the rest. The young man decided to try his luck in town. He had discovered the Nazis long before they came to power, which made him the envy of his comrades, as the number of his membership card was low. He appeared to be a man of few words. Johannes lapsed into silence, so as to give me a chance to interrogate his friend.

"Why are you a National-Socialist?"

The same incredulous look appeared on Hoefer's face I had seen before on Fest's. A clumsy jerk of his uncouth body indicated that he was about to resent the question, but Johannes repeated it to him with emphasis, as if to show that foreigners were sometimes queer.

"Why I am a National-Socialist?" Hoefer asked. "But every one must be a National-Socialist . . . all Germans. I am one because I am a German."

What did it mean to him to be a member of the Hitler party? He recalled the stock phrases of Nazidom from the innumerable addresses he had heard, and repeated them with the glee of the school-boy who knew the day's assignment by heart. It was a list of words denoting hatred in various forms.

He was excellent at hating, which may have explained his high rank in the party army. He poured his scorn on the Jews. Had he known many of them?

"There is a Jewish merchant in our village."

Was he a wicked person?

"He must be . . . he is a Jew."

Why did he hate the French? Had he seen many of them?

Yes, he was in the trenches at the age of eighteen, in the last year of the World War. Then he told a story which he must have told many times. In the last great German offensive, not far from the Marne, he had fallen into a deep hole, so that he almost broke his leg. Next to him there were two Frenchmen, half buried in the mud and débris. They held up their arms, shouted "Kamerad!" and wanted to surrender, but he killed them with his bayonet, and got a medal for his valour. He told this story in order to show how little use he had for the French. It was obvious that he hated the French more as an abstraction than as a reality, because they were involved in the conspiracy to damage the German fatherland. Like most Germans, Hoefler tried to have a *Weltanschauung*, and since he was a simple soul, his philosophy was also simple.

"Pointcarrae . . . Pointcarrae," he repeated, mispronouncing Poincaré's name. He was proud of his knowledge of the foreign statesman and a haughty look in his eyes revealed how much he thought of himself in that moment. That word made him feel like an expert in foreign affairs, a seer into the secrets of time. *So ein Fremdwort ziert den ganzen Menschen.*

Trying to find the causes of his strong political

reactions, I asked him about his previous party allegiance. Had he ever belonged to any other political party? He answered with a decisive No. Had he ever admired a leader as much as Hitler? His answer was a loud *No*. He had been the forgotten man in politics, about whom none of the former ruling parties cared, left alone in his native village, a mere farmhand, a lout. The Socialist party distrusted him because he was a peasant and the bourgeois parties did not want him, as he was not of good birth and had no social standing. He had been one of the millions waiting for a political Messiah to release them from their tongue-tied bondage to a religious vacuum and give them a string of catch-phrases to ornament their empty lives. He had been one of the millions who could neither live nor die politically, and so the religion of nationalism and hatred fell on fertile soil.

Once the idea dawned upon them, Hoefer and his fellow-converts performed miracles of brutality in the service of the Cause. Their simple-minded faith resented doubt, and considered disbelief high treason. Being Germans, they wanted to march in solid columns, and having lost their gods in the trenches they wanted a new belief. It was their faith to express the new religion with the goose-step and outbursts of hatred.

When Hitler took power, dreams came back to these formerly forgotten millions about the glories of the past. They remembered the school-book stories about Frederick the Great, when Germans were looked upon as barbarians and their name was feared. They remembered the call to arms after the Napoleonic

wars. It seemed to the more intelligent of them that even the German Second Empire of the Hohenzollerns had something to offer to racial pride in the form of a powerful army, which struck terror into alien hearts. The efficiency of the Prussian steam-roller had no match.

Hoefer was not sufficiently articulate to know what a happy idea it was to link nationalism to Prussian socialism, but some of his comrades were. As they saw the future, no extremes of poverty or of wealth were to be tolerated in the coming Third Reich of the Prussian Utopia. The little man was to come into his own. The department-store Leviathans were to disappear. Industry was to serve not private aims but the higher ends of the nation. Agriculture was to be freed of the fetters of entailed properties and every pure-blooded shepherd was to come into the Teutonic heritage of noble Siegfried. Class distinctions were to be levelled down in a Germanic version of Schiller's heroic dream: *Seid umschlungen Millionen. . . .*

Fest and Hoefer looked at each other with affection, and over two *seidels* of dark beer they renewed their bond of fraternal unity. As the brew began to make its effect felt they would have liked to rush into the street and kill, kill, kill for the love of the fatherland and the great *Führer*, Hitler.

A group of *Hitler Jugend* passed by on its way to a Nazi festival, singing the Horst Wessel song. The colour on the cheeks of Fest and Hoefer deepened as they took leave of the unbelieving stranger and, pounding the pavement with martial fire, they disappeared behind stately Ludwigskirche.

## VIII

### THE MIDDLE SEEKS ITS ROAD

**N**OT all Germans are Nazis like Fest or Hoefer. Some of them do not recognize the National-Socialist god, as they have other loyalties. Does this mean that they have no way whatever to make their influence felt on their country's affairs? We shall see.

Germany is haunted by age-old problems. One of them started some nine hundred years ago, when Pope Gregory VII "forbade emperor, king or prince to give investiture of bishoprics under pain of excommunication". It reached its climax when Emperor Henry IV disregarded the decree and was excommunicated. Thus the War of Investitures began and the Emperor made his penitence at Canossa. The Third Empire of Adolf Hitler is still at war with Rome, and therefore the next little man on our list of unknown heroes, Franz Schikedanz, looks around furtively before entering his home.

Herr Schikedanz is our hero not because of any heroic deeds as they are understood to-day. Nor does he think of himself as a hero, since he has not been guilty of any spectacular achievement and his life story has not as yet been tainted by printers' ink. He is our hero according to a higher standard, because



he has remained true to his loyalties in spite of the danger of death. Nor is this a death of the common variety, consummated when the executioner severs the head from the body. No, it is of the more cruel kind that is not inflicted upon the victim with a single blow. It is the death of countless mortal blows, of losing one's bread and perishing morally every day.

The reader will know by this time that Herr Schikedanz is not the real name of our hero, and that this chapter will deal with a German Catholic, of whom there are more than twenty millions in the Reich. The Hitler régime would like to exterminate them in order to be true to its nature. Catholicism is a religion, and so is Nazism, and if the former still defies Hitler it is because the Leader does not dare to take drastic action. Our Franz Schikedanz is one of the millions of dictators who are preventing the Nazis from exploiting their victory to the full.

We had an appointment at the Heinzelmännchen Fountain of Cologne. When he emerged from Goldschmiedstrasse, the chimes of the Rathaus began to play the Horst Wessel Song and the bell of the Dom struck nine. We were headed for his favourite *Bierhalle* near the post-office. On the way we talked about beer—which was a safe subject—and with a wistful smile he confided to me that every night he looked with the same expectation to emptying his glass.

He was a book-keeper in the employ of Herren Habicht and Solwart, first-class gentlemen-tailors, according to their advertisements, and he was also an amateur pianist. He was congenitally poor and

ambitious, yet not ambitious enough to make his way "through thick and thin". The highlight of his life was the visit of a music critic to his house at the invitation of a friend. The critic told him that he had talent and that he would see to it that he should be heard. Since then Herr Schikedanz has been waiting for his chance.

This is mentioned only parenthetically, in order to show that Herr Schikedanz is a man of dreams. He also has political ideas, which he gained by fortuitous circumstances, as most people do. In the early days of the republic he was swept into the ranks of the socialists by forces over which neither he nor millions of others had control. All of a sudden, the light had come to him that the socialists were the only ones to get the country out of the rut. He reached heights of eloquence when informing his admiring neighbours that to be socialistic was synonymous with being patriotic, as the Allies would surely forgive the Kaiser's sins for the sake of Karl Kautsky's sterling virtues.

The French march into the Ruhr coincided with his great awakening. It seems that the French had not forgiven the Kaiser, and the socialists were impotent to pacify them or to organize resistance. It took Herr Schikedanz several weeks to cover the distance between the Socialists and the National People's Party, which should not be confused with the Bavarian People's Party, of which the hero of the last chapter, Johannes Fest, had been a member.

As Schikedanz liked the absolute and was not accustomed to see political life as an art in compromise, he felt a great affection for Gustav Stresemann,

chancellor and godfather of the far-famed and now dead Locarno pacts. He believed that the millennial misunderstanding between the Germans and the French was the cause of the world's troubles and that the way to put an end to the reign of political terror was for the two countries to find a common platform. He felt relieved when the Locarno agreements were signed, convinced that the world was coming to its senses.

Needless to say, the disappointment following upon this hasty conclusion was extremely keen. With Stresemann died an idea and also the hope of Herr Schikedanz for the birth of a new world. He discovered now, with the disillusioned eyes of the lover on the morning after, that the People's Party represented merely private interests, and that he was out of place among its many factory magnates. Being German and therefore gregarious, he wanted a place where he could exchange his views with a group of like-minded persons.

He had long been a member of the Deutzer Kegelklub, most of the members of which happened to be voters of the Catholic Centre Party. The club was all right for its bowling-alleys; but one also has to talk politics, and the club was no place for that. He decided therefore to join the *Zentrum*, a pillar of the republic and of peace. Its club was spacious and some members were always willing to listen to one in exchange for the chance to be listened to. Herr Schikedanz liked the quiet dignity of the Centre Party's political meetings, and the unctuous eloquence of their political speakers. When hearing them he felt that quiet bliss which comes from listening to

smooth phrases neither original nor disturbing in any way.

By attending party rallies he learned to tell the difference between the Right and Left wing. He found the Right leader, Herr Prälat Kaas, too circumspect to meet the need for quick action, while the Left leader, Herr Kanzler Wirt, was a man to his taste, cautiously radical, but not too precipitate. After having listened to a great number of speeches and weighed them, he decided that he was a member of the party's progressive branch.

All went more or less well until that late January day in 1933 when Adolf Hitler assumed power as the chancellor of the Reich. For about a month afterwards a royal battle took place between Herr Franz Schikedanz and Herr Adolf Hitler, of which battle, however, the latter remained in ignorance. Each night Herr Schikedanz confronted his opponent in wakeful dream and told him his honest opinion. In these nocturnal phantom fights he asked Hitler why a leader of a so-called National-Socialist Party dared to accept the helping hand of industrial reactionaries of the Emil Kirdorf and Fritz Thyssen type. He also challenged Hitler for his alliance with the die-hard Junkers, and told him to his face that he was the grave-digger of German progress. Then he visited his restaurant and had his glass of beer.

Herr Schikedanz smiled bitterly when the wireless brought word that the communists had burned down the Reichstag. He knew that Hitler needed just such an accident to stop the foe that could have stopped him. He watch the growth of terror with increasing alarm.

At a meeting of the Centre Party's Bachelor Association, a group of brown shirts marched in and made the audience march out. He felt his blood rush to his head, and for several seconds he could hardly see; and he believed that either a piercing yell or a ferocious knock at some hard skull would relieve his feelings. It was seldom that such impulses overwhelmed him, and he was glad when this one passed as quickly as it had come. He felt the urge to go among the people and make them fight for their rights, but such impulses were never translated into action.

One night an imperious rap at his door woke him from his first sleep. In front of his door he found two men who identified themselves as members of the secret police, and who began to open his cupboards and chests of drawers without further ado. One of them had a hard look and continually murmured imprecations against the "black rabble". They were disappointed with him for their failure to find incriminating evidence, and banged his door without saying good-bye. A few days later, a distant relative whispered the warning into his ear that he had better make himself scarce as he was accused of being in correspondence with émigrés abroad. This, however, turned out to be a false alarm.

One morning Herr Schikedanz unfolded his *Kölnische Zeitung* on his favourite table at his favourite café, where he had breakfast, and he could not help rubbing his eyes in unbelieving amazement. Was he in his senses, or had the waiter played a trick on him? Had he been given a rabid Nazi paper, instead of the old faithful journal, his best companion through

life? No, there could be no mistake; the title, format, type and make-up were the same. But the soul of the "Cologne Gazette" was not the same. The editorial was a pæan to the Leader, most perfect of all men, Germany's reward for her sufferings. There could be no doubt that the great newspaper of the Rhineland had also been co-ordinated—*gleichgeschaltet*.

Herr Schikedanz sought refuge from the propaganda barrage in a Swiss daily paper. But the authorities seemed to be intent upon cutting him off from all outside information, and the sale of the Swiss paper was soon prohibited. The air was tainted with propaganda microbes, and the books repeated the eternal refrain: Hitler is infallible; he is God—and Goebbels, Goering and Rosenberg are his prophets.

Our hero now found it unsafe to get together with like-minded people. He sought solace in playing his piano, but his attention was called by a well-meaning neighbour to the fact that his favourite composer, Mendelssohn, was on the black list because of his Semitic origin. Some of his friends had been taken to concentration camps or disappeared—either in jail still or shot "while trying to escape".

In his nocturnal debates with Hitler, Herr Schikedanz was running short of points, for he could not replenish his ammunition of anti-Nazi arguments in a world ruled by propaganda. He began to feel lonely and to envy the enthusiasm of the men who donned their black or brown uniforms, sang Nazi songs, took part in romantic night manoeuvres and had no need to worry about losing their jobs.

As a born *Kölner*, he knew the ins and outs of the great Rhenish city, and he also knew that many of

his ex-comrades had joined the Nazi movement. Some of them had done so because they could no longer resist the relentless pounding of the propaganda machine, others because they believed there was no means of realizing their ideas outside of the Hitler movement. These people were ready to compromise with their conscience, sacrificing what they thought was mere ornament so that the great work of national reconstruction could be realized. They took the assurances of the government at its face value, that the Third Reich was to perpetuate the Teutonic greatness of the First Reich of the Hohenstaufens and was to eclipse the short-lived greatness of the Second Reich of the Hohenzollerns. Schikedanz also knew that several former Centre Party members had joined the Nazis in the hope that the taint of their previous allegiance might be removed, thinking it was their first duty to provide for their families. Many of them tried to establish a mental balance by persuading themselves that their new allegiance was not incompatible with the old one. Finally, there were those who believed that the most effective way of curbing Nazi excesses was to join the party and make it adopt their views.

Where was Herr Schikedanz to find his place? While visiting Berlin on a reduced-rate week-end trip he was surprised to find the city full of uniforms, and his German heart exulted at such a display. He attended a Nazi meeting and found it difficult to disapprove of the speakers' dwelling so much on the shame of Versailles. He admitted that he felt personally humiliated at the way the Allies had treated his country, and was particularly resentful at the thought

that, while infant countries were basking in the sun of unrestrained sovereignty, Germany had to put up with restrictions imposed from without.

Wherever he went, whatever he read, whatever speech he heard, he was haunted by the deification of Hitler. All Germany was reading the Leader's political testament and autobiography, *Mein Kampf*. Finally, he could not resist the temptation to read it, and the insane intensity of the book gripped him—he read on and on. When he finished, Stresemann was forgotten and he agreed with much that Hitler said about the French.

A moral tug-of-war was being staged in Herr Schikedanz, as his love of order confronted his love of liberty, and he began to wonder whether it was not best for his country to have a strong man leading it to battle against a hostile world. He tried to visualize a Reich from which political strife had been banished. Was not a nation better off without an excessive political individualism, resulting in divergent aims? Was not Hitler better than many petty party tyrants?

The fight resulted in a victory for his love of freedom. He decided that life would end in civic apathy, if all citizens reposed their rights in the hands of a Leader whom they invested with the qualities of divine infallibility. Yet he was still worried at the thought of being out of step with what might be a majority, organized in the vast Nazi movement. The Hitlerite thesis that it was high treason to be different had made a strong impression upon him.

But as the months of Nazi rule passed and Utopia receded into the distance, the sky-storming strivings leaving blood and misfortune in their wake, the



thoughts of Herr Schikedanz crystallized in a clearer conception of what the higher call of his nature was. He was repelled by the blood-purge, at which Nazis, Catholics, Hitler's friends and potential enemies, alike fell. He became aware of the real significance of Hitler's war on religion. The idea dawned upon him that this was the triumph of matter over spirit; a religion of blood and iron, of vicious vindictiveness and anti-humanitarian aims.

The fate of the monks and nuns whom Hitlerite judges convicted of alleged currency-smuggling made his heart bleed with grief. He heard more than what the newspapers were allowed to write about the persecution of the Catholic clergy, and of the unpremeditated reaction of unsophisticated village priests. He heard of cases where non-political Catholics had been crowded out of their jobs for no reason at all. He heard of Catholic villages being deprived of the State's aid if they refused to pay obeisance to force.

From long association with Jews he had gained an impression of them which was unlike the picture the Nazis painted. He knew of Jewish families which had lived in the Rhineland for centuries. How long had Hitler's ancestors lived in Germany? He heard of one of the former lights of Cologne, a Jewish lawyer with a distinguished World War record, with four sons in the trenches, who was hounded out of his native place as a pariah and outlaw.

Herr Schikedanz also followed the Protestant clergy's struggle against the Nazi régime with much sympathy, and often wondered whether their religion, too, was to be swamped by brutality. He cherished

the idea of a united front of all religions for the protection of man's spiritual values.

All this came to light while we were seated at his favourite table in the *Bierhalle*. He was now definitely in the anti-Nazi fold after having resisted the temptation. In the familiar setting of the place he felt at home. While life beyond the revolving door was a mess of disappointments, uncertainties, betrayed trust and persecutions, at the table, with a second glass of beer in front of him, existence looked better balanced. In this friendly environment Herr Schikedanz spoke boldly:

"We Germans cannot be treated the way the Italians and Russians have been treated—not in the long run, anyway. Am I a better German if I let them suppress my thoughts and accept the ready-made views of others? They call us a nation of philosophers, which we are not, but we are, at any rate, a thinking people.

"The Third Reich may be a good thing for certain people. It has accomplished certain things which had to be accomplished. Some of those things had to be done brutally. We are free from many onerous provisions of the Treaty of Versailles, which was our greatest grievance. The number of our unemployed has been reduced by some four million. That's really fine and praiseworthy. New highways are being built and our labour service is draining marshes, doing reforestation work, ransacking the land for new natural resources. All this is important, but more important than anything else is our self-confidence. How are we going to have it if we are treated like minors? Wilhelmstrasse has the last word in every-

thing, and if we fail to acclaim its decision, off we march to jail!

"Nowadays people talk about all kinds of complexes. The Prussians are supposed to have a superiority complex. That's nonsense. Nearly all of us Germans are suffering from a sense of inferiority, which many of us attempt to camouflage by trying to appear superior. We cannot help feeling that we were too late in arriving on the stage of the civilized world.

"Our greatest king, Frederick II, felt so inferior as a German that he accepted his French tailor's advice as to how to greet foreign ladies with outlandish grace. I know that I am not the only one wanting to impress Frenchmen with our culture on the rare occasions I come in touch with them. I mention the French, because we are supposed to hate them, although in reality we envy their old civilization, the smoothness of their manners, their diplomatic genius. We know that they were a powerful nation when we were a bunch of fighting duchies; they were self-consciously strong when we did not even know the meaning of the word 'nation'.

"Many Germans talk boastingly about the old Germanic culture; their Bible is Tacitus and their god is Wotan. This is only a second thought, because not more than a hundred and fifty years ago all that reminded us of our ancestors and of our old Germanic culture was something of which we were thoroughly ashamed. Since then we have made some progress, and at one time we were considered the marvels of the world because of our remarkable success in taking the lead in building up a machine civilization. It is my opinion that we were so good because of

## THE MIDDLE SEEKS ITS ROAD

our burning desire to impress the world; our will triumphed over our sense of inferiority. Hitlerism is another manifestation of this complex. It makes Germanism into a fetish, which may be a good thing for those who have no other incentive to be patriotic.

"I don't know where all this will lead to, but I do know that certain forces are stronger than any dictator, on account of which the Nazis had to adopt many innovations they didn't like and had to go beyond their original programme. They are trying to crush us, and yet I have the feeling"—this he said in a whisper—"that we are going to crush them! We can't do much openly, but we can keep quiet, and our calm is eloquent. We can also think, and the force of millions of people thinking is a strong force. Although we may appear too optimistic about the future, I am confident that spirit will again prove to be stronger than matter."

He ended his sentence with an enigmatic smile, drained his glass, looked at his watch and stood up. It was past his time to go. I accompanied him on his way home, past the Dom, towards the Goldschmiedstrasse. When we arrived at the Rathaus the last of the long-distance autobuses made ready to start. In the very minute the clock struck twelve, Herr Schikedanz said good-bye to me and politely asked me not to mention his name when reporting our conversation.

## IX

### THE LEFT ALSO DICTATES

**I**N the late Autumn of 1933, when the German polls were still free, about 13,000,000 men and women of the Reich voted for the socialist and communist candidates. At the so-called plebiscite in the late summer of 1934, when the Reich was made to approve of the government's withdrawal from the League of Nations and the General Disarmament Conference, only some 4,000,000 votes were cast against Hitler. What had happened to millions of former Marxists? Did they go over to the foe, or are there mysterious forces at work to account for the lost millions?

Marxism is outlawed in the Reich, and its suspected practitioners are treated as enemies of the State. Who will ever know the full number of those murdered for their devotion to socialism and communism? Who can tell the number detained in jails and concentration camps? The former probably run into thousands, the latter into hundreds of thousands. Some 80,000 Germans have left or fled from the Reich. But, even so, there are millions of ex-Marxians in Germany, physically free even though not free to express their thoughts.

Taking the example of the socialists, their number remained surprisingly stable throughout the Weimar

régime. Even when the Nazis scored their greatest triumphs they could make no inroads upon the socialist phalanx. Have these socialists succumbed now to Nazi propaganda, so that the Third Reich is really what it professes to be, a nation united in the worship of one Leader? No, the German scene has not undergone the changes indicated by superficial observation. A powerful anti-Hitler underground movement is at work. Those millions who are standing on the sidelines are exerting a strong influence on the policies of their worst enemies, the proof of which is, as we have seen before, that the Nazis have enacted more socialistic legislation than the socialists did when they were at the helm.

What does this indicate? It shows that in the twentieth century there is a public opinion boring from within, even though it is outlawed. You cannot put your finger on the source of this public opinion, since it is illegal and intangible. It shuns the light of day, and the executioner's axe puts an end to the lives of those who profess heretic views. Yet they are powerful and scoff at Hitler's threats, making him bow to their will.

How does the underground movement work? At first its leaders tried the "eruptive" method. At a given signal, the men who were ready to suffer the reward of martyrdom collected at a strategic point of some proletarian section, distributed leaflets, sometimes even addressed a few words of encouragement to the improvised audience, and vanished before the arrival of the police. The engineers of the eruptive method experimented with showering anti-Nazi literature from mysterious aeroplanes, the places of departure

of which could not be ascertained. They left party propaganda sheets on housetops and let the wind do the work of distribution. But this method had the drawback of risking the lives of the most daring members of the movement, and therefore had to be abandoned.

Next the "catacomb" method was developed. A network of party branches was set up to launch the underground offensive against the mighties of the Nazi realm. Watchers stood guard, and signals were agreed upon to warn of impending danger. Underground party meetings took place in small groups and sometimes the organizers even ventured to call a joint meeting of several groups. As a rule, however, the leader of one "cell" was known only to members of his group, so that the chances of discovery were reduced. They built up a strong press, containing spot news and general exhortation. Some of these underground journals were printed, others mimeographed or typewritten. At the time of writing this method is still in favour.

Hermann E—— was one of the printers of the *Free Labourer*, a Left-wing publication of a group of underground workers in the Wedding district of Berlin. He had become a printer because of his love of the printed word. He was not ashamed to admit that he had hoped to become an editor of one of these illegal sheets, but came to realize that he lacked the qualifications of a good editor. So devoid was he of false modesty that he told at length about his fiasco.

"What do you hope to accomplish by the underground opposition to an iron-clad régime?" I asked.

Although Hermann was a factory-worker, or perhaps because of that, he liked to express himself in choice language. He also liked dramatic effects. His answer was like the ones I had heard from several other like-minded persons.

"The only way we may become worthy of the freedom we want to enjoy is by fighting for it. The trouble with the Weimar Constitution was that we got it practically without any effort, so that we didn't realize its value and let it be wrested from us. This time we'll pay for our liberty with suffering and blood. At present Germany is a prison with 63,000,000 inmates and 2,000,000 jailers."

"But haven't the Nazis reduced unemployment, and isn't it difficult to stir up popular resentment against them because of their success in that field?"

"There are people who can be fooled and others who resent being fooled," he answered. "It's only the former who believe what the Nazis shout from the housetops about their economic victory; and they, too, believe it only until they die of hunger."

He saw the employment campaign of the Nazis merely as incidental to their high-pressure armament, and could not believe that such barren activity could produce economically fertile results. He believed that a nation which set its heart upon a destructive course could derive no lasting benefit from the incidental re-awakening of the employment market. He tried to make it clear to me that a vicious end infected its means.

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those days, he said, he spent an average of three nights a week at trade-union lectures and discussions. He liked nothing more than to listen to stimulating talk and then pour forth the knowledge thus acquired in bursts of oratory. The very words "Marxism", "surplus value", "excess profit", "historical materialism" made him thrill with almost physical pleasure, and he had a glorious time reading Bebel and Kautsky.

The conversation turned to the socialistic ideals of the pre-Hitler era and to the downfall of the republic. He admitted that the Weimar régime was not well supplied with dynamic men, and that most of the leaders were content with resting their case upon the logic of history and the justice of their cause. He assented to the view that the republic had been dazed by its early successes and had not the pluck to follow them up with determined action.

Hermann then unfolded his ideas about the end of the German republic. He believed Hitler could have been stopped. "The republic should have had the courage of its convictions." Big business, which was counter-revolutionary, should have been given a dose of the Russian medicine. The die-hard capitalists appeared to him as the villains of the drama, who played their own game and called it patriotism. Yes, it was the patriotism of munition-makers to make money by working for their country and the enemy at the same time.

"Big business always wins," he added emphatically.

Why did it win? Because it had the raw material of public opinion at its finger-tips in the form of press, radio, platform and pulpit. After having

contrived ingenious anti-socialist devices, it found one day that socialism had become part of the worker's life. So big bad business looked around for a spurious socialist with a powerful voice and an elastic conscience, who could be depended upon not to carry out his programme after having been helped into power. It picked Adolf Hitler, who seemed to be the ideal person.

Many people did not realize that the kind of socialism Hitler preached was really anti-socialism. He rode to victory helped by the money-bags of the manufacturers of public opinion. Since he had no political past, he was free to assume an intransigent attitude towards the Treaty of Versailles. His movement also had the good luck of enrolling a few men of unusual ability and boundless ambition, to help themselves to power on the back of a great popular mass-deception. Since the only people who could have stopped Hitler—the rich industrial and land magnates—were pushing him to the fore, and since the socialists and communists were fighting each other instead of the common enemy, the movement could sweep the political arena clean of opposition.

Even so, Hermann contended, Nazism could have been stopped if the republic had not been betrayed by its President, that grand old woman of Tannenberg, Field Marshal von Hindenburg. The old warrior was senile, and he was also a typical East Prussian Junker who had taken fright at the thought that an honest administration might do something about the glaring injustices of the land-holding system in his part of the country.

This conversation took place in one of those

proletarian flats which look so innocent from the outside, with their potted geraniums on the windowsill. Inside it looked just as innocent, since the pictures of Marx and Engels had long been removed, so as not to attract the attention of the *Gestapo*, the secret police . . . There were three of us in the room, the third one being the young man who had introduced me to Hermann, and whom we shall call Albert. He was tall and blond, a young Aryan god with an insinuating manner. In his small circle he enjoyed a great prestige, and he had an interesting story to tell.

A few weeks after Hitler's assumption of power he was arrested by two brown soldiers for tearing down a Nazi election poster. Strangely enough, his captors did not treat him roughly and merely told him that such a nice boy should not do foolish things. The older one of the two brown soldiers then took him aside and promised to let him go if he, in turn, would take a liking to him. At first Albert did not know what he meant, and only when the brown soldier began to caress his cheek did he realize that he had fallen into the hands of sexual perverts, of whom there were many in the Nazi ranks. He rejected these advances, which distressed his would-be friends. With a false smile of good-will they invited him to an extemporized trial, presided over by a friend of theirs, at which Albert was sentenced to fifty strokes on his back. During the ordeal he fainted several times, and when the beating was over he could not move. The brown soldiers advised him to breathe no word of his maltreatment or he would pay with his life. Then they took him into a con-

centration camp, where he was one of the targets for the brutalities of sadists, who made him clean the latrines and vented their cruel lust on him.

One night a vicious-looking guard approached him with the suggestion that this was the best time to escape. He claimed that he had great sympathy for Albert. The young man was familiar with the tale of "shot while trying to escape" and he left the advice unheeded. Bad treatment and constant worry made him ill, and while he was in the camp hospital a doctor called the commander's attention to him. The commander turned out to be one of those Nazis who had joined the party because they believed in its aims. He started an investigation, relieved several guards of their duties, and gave Albert his freedom.

After his release from the camp, Albert was obsessed with hatred of everything Nazi and plunged headlong into the underground movement. As a factory-worker he spoke the language of the man in the street, and because of his good looks he was popular with women. No one was bolder in distributing anti-Nazi leaflets than he. Albert was a Socialist, and his party financed him to visit factories, collect data about discontent and write about his experiences in the *Free Labourer*. He asked for little, and the money he got was only for the prime necessities of life.

Albert looked at contemporary events from a larger point of view and found that such trials as Germany was passing through were necessary for the growth of new ideas. He also believed that national-socialism would be the instrument through which real socialism would find its real destination.

"But how could the socialists gain real power?"

By breaking with the past! The old strategy was based on the idea of legitimacy. He believed that the ideal of socialism was penetrating so deeply into German mentality that no amount of purging could remove it. Victory could be accelerated by creating a united front of Left-wing Nazi opposition.

The trouble with old-fashioned socialists and communists was, Albert declared, that although they professed to be revolutionaries, they were really sticklers for form, subscribing to certain sets of dogmas, which they regarded with as much awe as primitives regarded their sacred cows. He admitted that the socialists were not any better than the communists. Although they called themselves revolutionaries, they were committed to a strict party line, which might as well be called party fetters. In the past they talked revolution and then, when challenged, were afraid to use it as an instrument of party policy. If they were as revolutionary in spirit as they professed to be, why did they not organize strong-arm squads to defy the Nazis, as the Nazis themselves had done when fighting for power?

Albert was trying to induce his comrades in the socialist and communist underground movement to bury their hatchets and move with the times. This was a curious statement about parties which claimed each to be the spearhead of progress, but Albert was frank in deprecating the kind of progress which, he said, consisted largely in quoting the books of an author who was born a century before. He believed, in other words, that the Marxists would not be able

to make real headway until they became revolutionaries not only in aspiration but in thought and action. He did not mean to say that they should throw bombs—he turned to me in explanation—but they must have sufficient courage to turn their backs on the sacred cows. “If you are always preoccupied with the thought of what Marx or Lenin may have done, you’ll paralyse your freedom of action.”

In political warfare one has to be unscrupulous, Albert shouted, and Hermann had to remind him to keep quiet. “You must be your own Marx and Lenin, and you mustn’t shirk responsibilities. Progress calls for sacrifices, and determined deviation from traditional party lines must be the first one of them.”

We reached the point where a little philosophy was injected into the discussion of ideological problems. For argument’s sake Hermann took the part of the devil’s advocate and asked whether it was one’s duty to an ungrateful humanity to have one’s body beaten to pulp? What was common welfare, anyway, and who were the people for whom one was sacrificing oneself? Were not some of them the very people who yesterday voted communist and to-day led the chant of the Leader’s worshippers?

Albert broke a moment’s silence:

“Yes, it may not appear worthwhile to expose ourselves to danger, but are we not worse than animals if we are content with licking the whip of our master? After all, man is a man because he has ideals. If he does nothing but eat, sleep, and propagate, he is still a man biologically, but not ethically. . . . Those who live in the future live more intensively and more like human beings than those

who live in the past. It is, after all, progress which lives, even though reaction seems to have the monopoly of rule. The French Revolution lasted only half a dozen years, followed by almost a century of reaction, and yet even reaction became more progressive under its influence. The conservatism of Napoleon III was revolutionary in comparison with the 'progressive' idealism of the reign of Louis XVI. Working for the future is the greatest reward of a life usefully spent. The fact that the Nazis are stealing our ideas is the greatest compliment they can pay us, even though they lack the honesty to carry out our ideals fully. This theft is more flattering than the persecutions to which we are subjected."

There was a momentary silence in the room, interrupted only by the blasts of the siren of a police car on a hurry call with a score of policemen, racing into the heart of the proletarian district of the capital of the Third Reich.



## X

### GERMANY IN EXILE

**Y**OU must also look abroad, in search of Germany's little dictators. Popular language calls the environs of the Champs-Élysées of Paris "The Little Reich".

Misery seemed to be out of place on this queen of all avenues on the early summer days when these observations were jotted down. The leaves of the young trees did not yet display the symptoms of gasoline poisoning. The fountains of the Rond-Point were spraying tiny diamonds into the crystalline air. Farther down the avenue, elegant children were riding on ponies led by children who were poorly dressed. The multicoloured parasols of the cafés added a touch of frivolity to the dignified avenue.

In front of the "Lido" there was the usual congestion of human traffic. Placid columns of men and women strolled down the avenue between the Étoile and the Rond-Point. Ears attuned to French cadences were puzzled by throaty German sounds. At one of the cafés a phantom cabinet of ex-ministers of the Reich sipped their orangeades, its members exchanging casual remarks. One of them had made history; and the others, too, had at one time basked in the sunshine of power.

In the moving Vanity Fair there were dark spots of exile misery. German émigré faces were contorted into grimaces meant to be smiles. Their bodies were racked by the fever of fear and by actual want. Some of them were ghosts haunting the Champs-Élysées day and night. Those who had no home sought shelter in the entrances of the Métro in the small hours. Some of them were hoping to chance upon fortune in the shape of philanthropy or a childhood friend. Pounding the pavement was the grand army of misfortune, composed of writers, artists, professionals, students; of former factory-workers, ex-petty officials, and little Jews whose only offence was their religion. This was the great cemetery of dreams, full of the tombstones of power, of quiet family life, of years spent in work.

They had a surplus of time on their idle hands, and their German proclivity to brood, analyse, philosophize, and tear themselves to pieces set up gladiatorial contests with themselves. They were articulate and anxious to speak, since the Champs-Élysées stimulated the courage of their opinions.

A man in his early thirties spoke. We shall call him Eugene. He was grateful for the *papier-mâché* magnificence of the café and for his cup of chocolate. He reached for the pastry with slow dignity, as if wanting to convince the world that he was not hungry. The Germany of which he spoke was no longer a reflection of life but a vision. He took sensuous pleasure in talking about his school life at Frankfurt-am-Main, and of his precocious interest in social problems. Before the war his father was a tailor of uniforms, but after the peace treaty cut the

German army to a small force of mercenaries he had to look for other work. His bitterness against the new order was intense, and he vented his spleen on the republic.

Eugene thought differently of the new order, and he enjoyed the pleasure of searching for new ideals. He joined several youth organizations, the members of which applied their collective brains to world-saving thoughts. The week-end trips to Taurus Mountain were delightful, and they indulged in the pleasures of climbing and peripatetic high-thinking. There was also joy in the novel experience of boys and girls hiking together in a newly found comradeship, thinking of life as a heroic adventure. They entertained lofty ideas of a Germany that should be the elder sister of smaller nations, united in a confederation. His lips trembled when he uttered the magic words "United States of Europe".

In those days they spoke of war as the atavistic barbarism of their murderous elders. With an indefatigable obsession they were installing modernistic furniture in the future dwelling of man, wondering how the nations would adjust themselves to the changed world outlook. How would they meet the challenge of the discredited past? Although not communists themselves, they looked to Russia with admiration. While they belonged to the Socialist Party, they were eclectic in their tastes. Eugene could no longer explain why he had not gone all the way Left. Was it because of the small-bourgeois fear of being too honest with his convictions? Or was it because the threat of violence was repellent to his democratic habits?

He remembered well how he lost himself in meditations on the affairs of the world. At the *Lesezirkel*, of which he was a member, he gave an account of what he had read at bi-weekly meetings. It did not occur to them then that the triumph of the new over the old might be short-lived, and the easiness of victory take its revenge.

He was just out of school when Forest Councillor Kapp marched his soldiers into Berlin and the republican government fled. This gave Eugene a shock, but he was compensated by a thrilled moment in which he saw with what superior calm Labour's passive resistance ousted the intruder. This served his small group as a lesson and they turned their attention to republican self-defence.

Eugene was offered a small position in the Frankfurt branch of the Socialist Party, which he accepted with qualms, as he wanted socialism to remain an ideal and not a source of income. His friends prevailed upon him, however, to accept the place by assuring him that in his new position he would have a better chance to mate theory with practice. Eugene had the eloquence of his strong conviction and was sufficiently a man of the people to speak their language. He liked to mingle with party comrades, find out their troubles and draw his conclusions, which confirmed his belief that capitalism was doomed. With all the zest of youth he went to work—and got another shock when he found that, instead of helping him along, some of the older members tried to block his way. He soon learned that they did so out of jealousy, because they were afraid he would out-distance them. After his early successes at young

people's outdoor meetings, they gave him a routine inside job, and one of the office elders told him with condescension that he would have to learn a lot before he was allowed to use his wings.

Eugene accepted these setbacks in a spirit of understanding, consoling himself with the thought that the ultimate aim was the success of the cause, not the gratification of his personal ambitions. What would become of the party, he reflected, if every one wanted to become a general? He set himself to the task of pruning his ambitions, even taking some pleasure in his adversity. He was among the first to rally to the Republican Defence Corps, the *Reichsbanner*, which the threat of reaction brought into being. He was also among the first who rallied to the idea that these potential defenders of the republic should be given a semi-military training. The relation of the socialists and communists interested him greatly, and he tried to call attention to certain dangers in a confidential talk with some leaders, when he finally managed to get to Berlin as a delegate to a party conference. But the bigwigs smiled at the excited young man and patted him on the back.

Was it not wrong, Eugene asked himself, for socialists and communists to fight each other instead of turning against the common enemy? Were not the reactionaries going to take advantage of the cannibalistic mood of the Marxian parties? They would be fools if they did not, he reflected. He took part in the organization of the local *Eiserne Front*, which appealed to the support of all anti-reactionaries, and he was pleased with the progress it made. But as the years passed and the republic ran into one rough

squall after another he became more critical of the leaders. He was now convinced that most of them were chair-warmers, who lacked the sacred fire of revolutionary will. Did they really think that the Socialist Party was to thrive forever without their doing anything to keep it afloat?

He observed Hitler's rise with dismay, but, like the rest of the Socialists, at first refused to take the man seriously. He did not think the funny creature could fool the masses indefinitely or that he could transplant Italian institutions to German soil. In Nazism he saw merely the caricature of Mussolini's theatrical performance.

But the first meeting of Hitlerites he ever attended disturbed him greatly. The composition of the audience itself was disquieting. The huge auditorium was crowded with people with intense expectation on their faces. They seemed to be men and women for whom a political talk was a new experience, and they were drawn from the formerly non-political parts of the realm, ex-middle-class people, seeking the fire they themselves lacked. They were ready to go wild while still retaining their dignity, and were cautiously eager to be made into revolutionaries in good standing. Hitler angered Eugene with his artificially ingenuous attitude. His speech appeared to him a queer concoction of shrewd politics and judicious madness. Although the oration lasted for nearly two hours, the audience lapped up every word and asked for more.

Eugene was eager to fathom the deeper causes of Hitler's success. He was not yet ready to concede the breakdown of the republic and of the Socialist

Party. He persisted in the belief that the mass of undigested promises Hitler offered to the voters could not deceive the German people. In the Hitlerite *Weltanschauung* he saw merely the repetition of old platitudes dished up as new. After considerable meditation, he saw the key to the Nazi anti-Semitism as a demagogue's need to offer a pet hatred to the masses. He found that such a common hatred was a connecting link between the divers interests meeting on the Nazi platform, but he also found that basically such a hatred was alien to the modern German, and that it was only high-pressure propaganda which made it a live issue. Working his way towards a clearer understanding of the change in the German temper, he found that the death of old allegiances and the birth of new were of great help to political buccaneers, and, realizing for the first time the deep impression Hitler made on the masses, he began to fear for the life of the German republic. After all, he pondered, the Nazis had the additional advantage of not being committed to set doctrines or to common decency, which must be of inestimable value in an age scorning both principles and morals. The republican parties, on the other hand, still owned that it was sacred dogma and honesty which qualified them for success.

He followed the death struggle of the republic with impotent sorrow, fully convinced at last that the leaders of the republic were not up to the mark, and that, therefore, neither *Reichsbanner* nor *Eiserne Front* would have the chance to perform its self-allotted task. He was thunderstruck when reading that Prussia's republican government had surrendered

to reaction without even attempting resistance. Would the leaders permit the Hitlerites to seize power in the national government?

Even before the republic went down to defeat, Eugene and a few of his socialist friends had concluded a private pact of their own with a few communist leaders of Frankfurt, which was to start them on the path of a republican united front against reaction. Then came January 30, 1933, when President von Hindenburg called Adolf Hitler to the chancellorship, and Eugene received the worst blow of his political life. . Not long before he had himself spread propaganda for the *Alte* to be re-elected for a presidential second term.

At first he attached some hope to the fact that the key positions in the government were filled by Hindenburg's confidential men, even though he realized they were die-hards. The first moves of the government gave no indication that Hitler would so soon break his oath to the republic and the constitution. Eugene's small underground movement fizzled out. It might have been of some use if the republicans had given the signal for resistance, but they did no such thing. The government consolidated its power, shunted the Nationalists aside, and the Hitlerites became the Reich's real masters.

When the police called at his home he had gone to visit some relatives in a village of the Black Forest. Several friends of his, who were members of the same group, were rounded up and jailed. One of them, a Jew, had to submit to special indignities. His jailers put a clown's cap on his head and pinned a poster on his back with the words: "Kick me! I



am a dirty Jew." His colleagues in misfortune had to kick him, and when he tried to implore his torturers to leave him in peace they turned against him, saying that if he did not want to be kicked he should not invite people to do so.

There was nothing in Germany for a man with a price on his head, so Eugene decided to sneak out of the country. Tramping the woods by night, he emerged in France. Although the French frontier guards gave him no warm welcome, they made no fuss about his having no passport and shipped him to Paris with a consignment of refugees. In the French capital they were taken in tow by a charitable organization headed by a Rothschild.

Months of unmitigated horror followed, when he had just enough to eat and sometimes not even that. Although he was not a Jew, he lived on Jewish charity. A robust man, his appetite was above normal, and he tried to still his hunger with cups of cheap coffee, and he made an arrangement with a sympathetic waiter to give him a restaurant's stale bread. He called at Socialist headquarters, where he found comrades anxious to help him but barely able to help themselves. He offered to contribute to a Left-wing publication only to find that his knowledge of the language was too faulty for a journalistic career. He joined a refugee class which was studying French, and after a few months undertook to give lessons to others. Although his knowledge of French was far from adequate, the fact that he charged only two francs an hour made his pupils forgive his linguistic shortcomings. Most of his pupils could not manage to pay even that trifle, and although he could

now fill his stomach he could not pay his rent. One day he found the wooden box which contained all his belongings in front of the door of his room, and his landlady told him to try his luck in *Allemagne*. He spent that night in a Métro entrance, and he cried. He wanted no more charity. Greedily he accepted the offer of another refugee to share quarters and rent with him. It was an awful place, Eugene said, but it was better than the Métro.

From time to time he was given temporary work as an unskilled labourer. Many of his French comrades were considerate and appreciated the refugee's plight, but others, who were fascists, kicked the *méteque* out of their way, and one of them reported him to the police. The police official was kind and warned him not to be caught again.

Eugene now set his heart on finding a little place somewhere in the world where he would not be a burden. His eyes lingered caressingly on the outlines of Uruguay, as shown on the map, but he would have been happier in South Africa. Unluckily the door was closed, and Eugene reflected bitterly that in a world of two billion people there was no place for a man who wanted nothing more than his daily bread.

Sometimes a few comrades in arms would meet and exchange views on current events. One of them suggested that it was time to stop bewailing the past and do something about the future. The others were mildly interested, but nothing was done about the project, as their thoughts were concentrated on a plate of hot soup and a chance to emigrate. But

they helped to copy socialistic leaflets to be smuggled into Germany.

In the first few months of the Third Reich they scanned the European horizon for signs of a revolt against Hitler. It was Eugene's opinion that the fate of the Nazi régime would be decided beyond the frontiers of the Reich. How could the former Allies recognize a rule which was in defiance of the Treaty of Versailles? When Hitler had torn up the treaty and set his war-machine afoot, he felt the time had come for the civilized nations to act. They did act, indeed, and Great Britain hastened to conclude a naval pact with the treaty-breaking Germans! After that, Eugene no longer cherished the hope that foreign opinion could subdue the Hitler régime.

Several other German exiles took chairs at the next table to us and began to talk in whispers, as if still in fear of the Nazi police.

"What will be the end of all this?" I asked Eugene.

"No régime can long survive the loss of its economic basis," he answered. "Hitler is still tolerated because millions have not yet found out for themselves that he cannot give them a better living than the republic was able to do. They also believe that he is the hero who has given them their national self-confidence."

At that he could not suppress a sharp little laugh.

"It is remarkable that a nation should be driven to believe in its greatness at the point of bayonets. Now that they have lost their right to select their own representatives, they suppose they are free.

They are the glorious Nordics, the aristocrats of creation, in a Third Reich which denies them the right to think for themselves.

"It is highly amusing to watch these Knights of the Holy Grail, these kings of creation, shout *Heil* at the word of command of a beastly sadist, the lowest of the low.

"No wonder the Jews are so despised in the Third Reich, whether they are Nobel Prize winners or usurers! The Jew lacks the capacity of the Nordic nobleman to shriek his delight at having a master with a whip.

"You can't understand this German Black Mass," Eugene continued, and there was a strange glow in his eyes, "without visualizing the Reich as the hunting ground of a couple of millions of moral perverts, who have saddled their monstrous faith in the Strong Man upon tens of millions of honest Germans.

"But Germany alone is not to be blamed. The French refused to help the republic past the worst eddies, on the ground that no German was worth saving. This was in contradiction, of course, with their war-time protestations that Germany was not the Kaiser.

"We are now in a political age, and the greatest genius sinks on his knees in the presence of an all-round ignoramus with political pull. What can you expect, then, of the herd-man?

"What will happen to Germany? She will have to go through a hell of shame before reaching the purified atmosphere of real social democracy. The Hitlerites call parliamentarism the token of the

slave-man, an alien product, a hideous offspring of the French revolution. Germany will have to learn that it is just the opposite of what they say—the clearest expression of man's collective will. But it has to be fought for, not merely accepted. The English fought for it in two revolutions. The French began to fight for it long before their great Revolution, and they are fighting for it even to-day. The French know a good thing when they see it, and they are shrewd enough to know that democracy is the best thing for the little man, who doesn't want to be the slave of political gangsters of the Hitler and Mussolini type. It takes the Germans a long time to appreciate what it means to be free.

"The Nazis picture the republican régime as a whirlpool of dishonesty. They don't know, or don't want to know, that every institution has its drawbacks and that democracy also has its children's diseases. It is no argument against life that sometimes we are afflicted with illness. Democracy must be given time to work out its destiny. Besides, what do we know about the diseases of fascism? Their press is not free, as ours was."

"And the future?"

"At present it's black. The Hitler government has probably lost the majority of its adherents, and yet it goes on living. A dictatorship can live longer than a democracy because of its use of force; but even a dictatorship is subject to certain natural laws, which work in our favour. Public opinion cannot be entirely suppressed, and in Germany it is still in existence. The absurdities of the Hitler rule are our best allies. The masses become restless if they don't

see the New Day. The factory pariahs are greedily swallowing the propaganda stuff we are smuggling to them. Farm-hands in Germany are disillusioned. The army is satisfied as long as it is fed with gold, but what will happen after Germany has exhausted her internal credit? The chances are that this régime will get no foreign loans.

"The ironmasters and coal barons also are distressed because the Hitlerites kept the country to themselves and did not turn it over to them. They thought Adolf Hitler would kill the communist monster and then clear out, leaving the big capitalists in full control. Instead of that, Hitler himself was forced by public opinion to adopt some of the communistic measures, although he did so against his inclinations. While he is an enemy of labour and friend of the rich, he could not have held himself at the top if he had not yielded to some popular demands.

"Sooner or later the Nazi swindle will be clear even to the dullest Prussian. When Hitler is out, democracy may not yet be in, but the day of salvation will be closer. Some of our friends say that communism is inevitable after Hitler, while others say that a military dictatorship will provide the transition. What is essential to-day is that the people of Germany are waking up to the realization of the great betrayal that is being perpetrated upon them. We are doing our share," he added with a sly smile, "to make them see what is going on in their country."

Eugene lapsed into quiet contemplation of the scene around him, perhaps thinking of his hunt for bread, of the grim faces which greet a man who is looking for a job. He drank his second cup of chocolate

and nibbled at a piece of cake, carefully keeping up the pretence that he was not hungry.

Is he one of the millions of dictators, now muzzled, who will regain the helm in the coming Reich?

"Come to dinner with me to-night?" I invited him.

His eyes flamed.





STALIN IS NOT THE WHOLE SHOW

## XI

### TOVARISH IVAN BECOMES ARTICULATE

THE Russia of yesterday was not only the country of Tolstoy and Dostoievski, as many foreign observers are inclined to believe, but also of Ivan Ivanovitch, the *mujik*, multiplied a hundred and sixty million times. A glance at the Russia of day-before-yesterday may be of help in explaining the temper of the Russia of yesterday and to-day.

At the time of Charles II of England, Russia was not thought worthy of a full-fledged ambassador, so that the Earl of Carlisle, who was also vice-admiral of Northumberland, Cumberland and Durham, was appointed envoy simultaneously to Russia, Sweden and Denmark. He left for Moscow with great expectations of a gay time and considerable fear of lice, and bade good-bye to the capital with both hopes and fears confirmed. Not only were his impressions strong but he knew how to convey them with emphasis.

"It would seem," he said, "that laziness, the mother of all vices, is the heritage of the Russians. They are slothful, afraid of work, which they perform only by necessity, and frequently prefer being flogged to being occupied honestly.

"Hence drunkenness is common among them, and

so few persons are exempt from that vice that even the clergy is as much addicted to it as the laymen. *Vodka*, which is like Circe's drink, is the fluid that makes them act like pigs."

The dinner which the Czar gave in honour of the ambassador lasted from two in the afternoon until eleven at night, and even though it was the time of the *carême*, when no meats were served, some five hundred dishes were placed on the table.

Privy-Councillor Baron von Meyerberg, whom Emperor Leopold of Austria dispatched in 1661 to the court of Alexis Mihailovich, Grand Duke of Muscovy, also carried away strong impressions from Russia:

"The Muscovites are so much addicted to duplicity that there is no sincerity in their words. They display so much impudence in buttressing their lies with new ones that no matter how sure you are of their falsity, sometimes you are in doubt. If some incontrovertible evidence should expose them, they smile without blushing, as if they had been surprised in the performance of a noble deed."

About Russian superstition the Austrian ambassador recorded this choice custom:

"Before burying the dead, the priest puts a certificate in his hand, written by the notary of the place in which he died, duly signed and paid for in gold, in which it is testified that the dead one had lived in the communion of the Greek Church, gained absolution and the Holy Eucharist by confessing the sins he may have committed, observed the fasts, kept awake at prayers, honoured God and the saints, as he had to do, and that the certificate had been given

to him to show it to St. Peter, so that he may open to him the gates of Paradise . . .”

Meyerberg also gave an account of a Russian feast:

“To all those seated at the table a piece of bread is given, but not always. Only persons of quality receive plates, napkins, forks and knives. . . .”

Chappe d’Auteroche, a member of the French Royal Academy of Sciences, visited Russia in 1770, and wrote about his trip in his *Voyages en Sibirie*. He concluded his observations:

“The force animating the entire nation is fear. . . . Everybody distrusts everybody else. . . . Friendship has never been known in Russia.”

Robert Johnson, an English traveller, published his *Travels Through Part of the Russian Empire and the Country of Poland* in 1815, and confirmed several observations of his predecessors:

“The Russian is perfidious and malevolent, leaning to theft and maraud, mendacity and deceit. Although some of them never touch alcohol, one encounters many of them in a revolting state of drunkenness.”

The Marquis Astolphe de Custine, grandson of General de Custine, guillotined during the Revolution, devoted his attention, among other things, to Russia’s government in his illuminating book, *La Russie en 1839*:

“In Russian administration, application to minute details does not exclude disorder. They go to great trouble in order to achieve an insignificant aim, and know no bounds in showing their zeal. . . . Although they are endowed with much grace, they are devoid of genius. Their *esprit* is an imitating one and,

therefore, more ironic than fecund. . . . The new imperial palace, rebuilt after the fire at the expense of so much life and money, is already full of vermin. One would say that the unfortunate labourers who killed themselves in ornamenting the imperial master's house at such a speed, took revenge in advance by infesting those homicidal walls with their parasites. . . ."

The following lines sum up a characterization of Old Russia:

"Without mediæval and ancient memories, without Catholicism and knighthood behind them, without respect for one's word . . . as meaninglessly polished as the Chinese, as coarse as the Kalmucks, as filthy as the Lapps, as beautiful as the angels, as ignorant as the savages, as subtle as the Jews, as intriguing as liberated slaves, as sweet and ponderous as the Orientals, as cruel as the barbarians—such are the Russians."

Jules Legras, Professor at the Sorbonne, who likes old Russia and dislikes the new one, writes in his book, *L'Ame Russe*, that even shortly before the World War the stories of the early travellers about the drunkenness, laziness and mendacity of the Russians held true. At the same time he gives them credit for being good and gay. The essential difference between "Europe" and Russia, as he sees it, is found in the active or positive sentiment as the basis of the conception of life in the West, and the passive or negative sentiment in Russia.

"The Russians await to-morrow, instead of going to meet it."

The same author mentions the following incident:

"When the Russian people wanted to erect an expiatory church on the spot where Emperor Alexander II had been assassinated, the funds were entrusted to a grand duke. The church was built, but when the bills were presented, it was found that the grand duke had stolen the money. The church was paid for partly by the State and partly by His Majesty, probably after violent family quarrels."

In Gogol's famous play, *The Revizor*, a higher official rebukes a minor bureaucrat: "You steal more than your rank permits".

Professor Legras attributes mendacity and dishonesty under the old régime to slave mentality. The only weapon of the tens of millions of oppressed was their wits, which they used as unscrupulously against their masters as their oppressors exploited them. Official corruption was facilitated by enormous distances, which made verification of statements extremely difficult.

An important characteristic of the Russian peasant—of the peasant of every country—is his attachment to the soil, pregnantly expressed by the proverbial words of a serf more than a century ago: "We belong to you, but the land belongs to us".

Professor Legras visited a sugar factory in the Tchernigof government, which the peasants had pillaged and partly burned during the revolutionary outbreak of 1905. They told him:

"This factory must disappear. We don't need it. What we need is the land which these buildings cover."

While the attachment of the Russian *mujik* to the soil is a general peasant characteristic, his slothfulness

and other vices were typically Russian. It was for that reason that in Holy Russia there was practically no public opinion on the countryside.

The climate has been blamed for moulding Russian character. The forbidding cold of the sprawling steppes and of Siberia has been pictured as the enemy of work and the friend of apathy. But do the Scandinavian countries not march in the vanguard of civilization? If it is answered that the climates even of the northernmost parts of Sweden and Norway are tempered by the Gulf Stream, we may point to Russia's immediate neighbour, Finland, or to most of Canada, the climate of which is hardly more hospitable than that of Siberia.

Nor would it be just to blame the Slavic race for the temperament of old Russia. The Czechs, for instance, are Slavs, and it would be difficult to find a more industrious nation in all Europe. Or take the Bulgarians, who have a well-earned fame for sustained energy. The Yugoslavs have also furnished inspiring examples of the workingman's quiet heroism.

The Russian temperament may be explained more easily on the ground that the steppes provided no barrier against eastern invasion, and that Russia was for centuries the highway of nomads in search of better land, affording little chance for a nation of many millions to settle down to a quiet life, as the endless movements of races and tribes resulted in a chronically unsettled state of affairs. When the Tartars of Genghis Khan overran the West early in the thirteenth century, Asia spilled over into Europe and the Russians had to suffer for centuries. Their

ruthless exploitation of the peaceful Slavs called for a strong defensive reaction on the part of the oppressed.

The state of eternal fight in which these regions floundered helped the native war lords, who found the ground prepared. Millions of helpless peasants were ready to accept their yoke out of habitude and necessity, since they believed that the native masters would show more mercy than the aliens, a hope in which they were deceived. The reign of domestic terror which ensued broke the resistance of the peasants to tyranny. Since rapacious landlords were never sated with serf work, the slaves of the soil fell into an apathetic state of mind, concerned merely with the necessities of life. Periodical famines, also, helped to make them fatalistic.

When bolshevism came to Russia she was an Asiatic country, which means that she not only distrusted but hated progress. The communist leaders found themselves confronted with the task of changing the entire mode of living of millions, who had no desire to see them changed. The result of Russia's geographic position and of the traditions of centuries was to be undone in a few years, and she was to take the lead in the pageant of great nations. Such a task would have staggered even the most intrepid leaders if they had not been imbued with a fanatic belief in their mission. In the following pages we shall see how new Russia is trying to strip off her heritage, become acquainted with community problems, and make the wheels of progress whirl.

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It was Ivan Malakoff's turn to tell the story of his life to the purging commission.



As a member of the Communist Party, he was subject to such periodical cross-examinations in the presence of a critical audience. A member of the party must shine in the armour of proletarian virtue, and even his common frailties are not easily condoned.

Malakoff told his story without betraying the pride he felt in it. A communist must have no personal pride, being merely a tool of powerful forces which transcend individual fates. He must see himself in the rôle of one of millions marching to higher destinies. He enjoyed the chance of speaking about himself, as his past was untarnished and his conscience clean. And so he began his story in a voice that could be heard in the farthest corner of the room.

He was born on a farm near the city of Samara on the Volga. Although the city chimneys could be clearly seen from his native place, they might just as well have been hundreds of miles away for all they meant to it. The village was primitive, innocent of civilization, its only landmark the unseemly church squatting in the midst of the peasant huts like a mother chicken with her brood. At the edge of the village the monotony of the landscape was broken by a huge oak, its trunk rotting with age. The River Volga was a few versts away to the east, but it could not be seen from the Malakoff shack. On summer days the leaden sky was a tight cover over the boiling cauldron of the plains. The horizon was the limit of the small world in which Ivan's youth was lived; its only visible connection with the outside world was a bunch of ruts, known as the Samara Road, which was a fathomless sea

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of mud in rainy weather and the source of an endless supply of dust under the broiling sun.

The purging commission settled down to hear the story, and so did the audience. There was no sign of impatience with the introduction and Ivan's ready tongue helped him gain the good-will of his hearers, who promised themselves a good show.

Ivan's father was a bibulous *mujik* and his mother was a superstitious pagan of the Greek Orthodox faith. Nicola, the father, was habitually lazy, which quality he inherited from a long line of ancestors. His love of *vodka* was notorious, and whenever he lacked the requisite number of kopeks to buy it he was satisfied with plain denatured alcohol. Nicola's mouth was an open sore, and his stomach must have been as leathery as that of an ostrich. Besides drinking, he used his mouth for cursing, which he did remarkably well and with a verve that belied his fame for sloth. He had an old aunt, known to the village as a miser and a rich woman, and upon her death Nicola inherited her fortune, which turned out to be a few scores of rubles. He suspected the old witch of having buried the treasure, consulted the fortune-teller on the subject, and followed her advice to dig a hole seven feet deep at the spot where he had seen a rabbit run across the road on the night of the last full moon. The treasure, however, did not come to light.

Although Nicola hated work more than the devil, he could not escape it. At three o'clock on summer mornings he was on his way to the fields, where he stayed until dusk, as he had to have money for *vodka* and the tax-collector. He did not

know how much tax he must pay, but he did know that there was no end to it, and if the money did not await the collector in a pile, Nicola got a good beating and had to pay the money anyway.

Just to show what the father's inclinations were, Ivan told the commission that after he had come into his dead aunt's money, he shut himself up in the church cellar and drank himself nearly to death with a big bottle of poisonous *vodka*. A neighbour heard his delirious moans and, suspecting the Evil One, aroused the villagers, who found Nicola unconscious. After having trampled and spat on him, they called the local surgeon-barber, who was a great healer. His only cure was blood-letting, which he did so well that Nicola recovered sufficiently to resume his work and drink.

Ivan's mother, Glava, was an old woman at the age of thirty because of piety and work. She worked at home and also in the surgeon-barber's household, getting from him a few kopeks a day, for which she bought candles for her favourite ikons. The family shared quarters with a few animals. Originally there had been a partition between man and beast, but one cold winter's day it burned down, and from then on the animals had the freedom of the entire house. There were only a few of them: two pigs and half a dozen chickens.

Ivan's education consisted largely of more or less regular beatings, in which his father and mother shared almost equally. They beat him for cause and without it, since they felt they must have someone on whom to repay the beatings they themselves had received from life. His father also beat his

mother, and she, in return, kicked his father's shins when he was sprawling on the floor in a drunken stupor. Otherwise she revered him, because the husband is the wife's lord and master. Ivan's brothers and sisters had died in infancy, except one brother who had been lost sight of long before.

Although several coats of grime covered it, Ivan had a pleasant little face. The priest, who had taken a liking to him, suggested that he be taken to the city school, but the father hardly knew what the man of the church was talking about, as schools were unknown in those parts. At that age the boy knew nothing about State or nation—not even their names. He knew, of course, about Fatherkin Czar, living in distant St. Petersburg, but he was part of religion and not of nation. The birthdays, name-days of Fatherkin and of his kinsfolk, were high holidays in the village.

Ivan was not dissatisfied with life, as he was too small and insignificant to be dissatisfied with anything. If he thought anything at all about the future, he must have seen himself in his father's place, working, sleeping, swearing, beating; sweaty, grimy, angry except when drunk. At that early age, Ivan knew that drink could give joy and smiles.

Then politics entered the Malakoff home, one day in 1905, when word spread that a revolt was on against Fatherkin Czar. Mother Glava told a neighbour, sobbing, that this was a terrible thing, because the Czar was a sainted man, and she gave her favourite ikon an additional red candle. The sky above Samara was hemmed with red and the

villagers agreed that it must be Hell's ruddy light. A few days later it was learned that the revolutionaries had burned up the Samara barracks. A few more days elapsed, when a couple of mounted rural policemen, *uryadniki*, descended upon the village, beat up the peasants, and cleared out. The villagers hated them and called them *kuryadniki*, chicken thieves.

This was Russia's "terrible year", when her defeat by the Japanese and the smouldering discontent against the ruling *régime* caused an explosion.

The red sky and the policemen's raid were nearly forgotten when a stranger appeared in the village, hired by the richest landowner of the district to keep the peasants from preying on his wheat. His heavy beard and bushy eyebrows lent him the appearance of a story-book ogre, which may have been the main reason for the landlord's employing him.

He kept himself apart, as was expected of him, since it was his duty to be suspicious of all peasants. One evening, however, when Ivan was on his way home, he met the strange watchman, who told him to follow him. Although Ivan felt like running away, he obeyed, because the stranger's voice was both imperious and kind.

From that day on Ivan and the stranger often met after his father had drunk himself into a torpor and his mother had prayed herself to sleep. The things the watchman said were so strange that Ivan thought something must be wrong with his mind. He spoke of a future in which peasants would not take to vodka and their wives to ikons because of

the need to escape the realities of life. He foresaw an age in which boys like Ivan would have a chance to learn and find out the truth for themselves. All this sounded very mysterious, but Ivan had some native intelligence and the strange words stuck in his memory.

"What is truth?" Ivan asked innocently, and the stranger gave a bitter laugh. With his eyes boring into the empty distance he uttered queer words about every peasant's right to have a piece of land. He also spoke about the end of privileges and the coming rule of the proletariat—words Ivan had never heard.

Boys who were older than Ivan began to frequent the stranger's company, but always on the sly, and he addressed all of them as if in a trance. One of the boys said he understood what the stranger said, and told the others they must keep it to themselves, as a careless word might send the queer watchman to the gallows.

One day the stranger was nowhere and Matushka, niece of the surgeon-barber, said she had seen him taken away by a couple of *uryadniki*. Catherine, wife of the bow-legged teamster, declared with great emphasis that it was a couple of hooped devils who had chased the stranger away at midnight, and it was her the villagers believed.

Ivan learned only later that the stranger was one of the revolutionary fanatics who scoured the countryside, apostles of progress and martyrs in the cause of to-morrow. This particular stranger seems to have been interested in shaping the thoughts of youth, building for the future, despising speedy results.

Many things the stranger had said stuck in Ivan's memory. Had he really told them that the Czar was not God's deputy on earth? What had he meant by "private property"? All this was very puzzling, even after Ivan had become a full-sized *mujik* and was about to come into his paternal heritage of cruelty and drink. But the stranger had also said that vodka was poison for body and mind, and Ivan wondered what he meant. As a matter of fact, he had no desire for drink, for which he earned the scorn of the red-blooded, wife-beating *mujiks*.

When working on the family's small plot of land, Ivan's eyes encompassed the waving sea of wheat belonging to His High Excellency, the governor's cousin, and he felt a bitter taste in his mouth. On such occasions his thoughts reverted to the stranger. Had he suggested, by any means, that the land of His High Excellency's cousin should be distributed among the peasants? But he cast this thought out of his mind as soon as it had come, glancing around furtively to see if he had not been caught in the act of thinking rebellious thoughts.

Then came the war. And when Lenin introduced bolshevism into Russia Ivan Malakoff, on the point of becoming an accomplished communist, at last dared to finish his thoughts. The stranger had made a good selection in talking to him. The ideas he had planted were in full bloom. Ivan, a young man of twenty-two, astounded his comrades with his glib tongue. He was on the Red Front when the counter-revolutionary Admiral Kolchak penetrated nearly as far as Samara in his thrust against the heart of Russia,



and he was appointed political commissary of a regiment whose duty it was to give the soldiers their fare of communist talk. After the admiral's army was repulsed, Ivan marched with the Red regiments towards the Urals, and from there on to Siberia. The villages burned and peasants massacred by the Whites aroused him to flights of furious eloquence. His regiment kept constantly on the move, occupying Omsk, Semipalatinsk, Tomsk, Krasnoyarsk. There he was wounded and sent back to Samara, where it took him a year to recover.

He had left his village and become a mechanic, working diligently at the tasks assigned to him. The Five Year Plan found him at Magnitogorsk, hard at work, an *udarnik* or factory shock-trooper and chairman of the plant's Communist Party Committee. He asked to be transferred to Moscow, and there he worked in an automobile factory. He met a young girl and married her. They lived in one of the new workmen's apartment houses. They had a little daughter, whom they were training to become a class-conscious proletarian.

The chairman of the purging commission asked for comments on the testimony of Tovarish Malakoff. Several persons spoke on his behalf, and nobody spoke against him, whereupon the commission commended Ivan for his work and loyalty to the party.

\* \* \*

After the "purge" we were to meet, Ivan and I, in the lobby of the Hotel Metropole. I saw him coming from Revolutionary Square, looking at the animated scene with a contented smile before he

passed through the revolving door. He seemed to be proud of the daring façade of the Grand Theatre, of the Muscovite baroque of the House of Syndicates, and particularly of the gigantic Hotel of the Soviets, then under construction. This was Red Moscow, of which he was proud to be a part.

Together we entered the restaurant, where groups of self-conscious Americans sampled caviar and champagne. The orchestra played an old *Schlager* of Germany's musical stage, followed by the semi-classical stand-bys of the Second French Empire. A haughty waiter eyed Malakoff's Russian clothes with suspicion, ready to tell him that in this restaurant *valuta* was the only means of payment. Ivan sought to conceal his momentary embarrassment behind a studied indifference. All was set for a grand talk, and he delighted in monologues. He felt himself irresistible and rolled out his words like so many tidbits, occasionally accentuating the rhythmic flow of his sentences with a slight tapping of his feet. In such moments he stood in awe before his own eloquence.

As a member of the Communist Party, Ivan was one of the 2,300,000 who had a direct influence on the Soviet Union's policies through the annual Party Congress, which, in turn, elects the Central Committee and the powerful Political Bureau. Once he spoke before the Congress and felt that he had made a good impression. As one of the *élite* he had the privilege of criticism. He had to use it with discretion, however, if he did not want to become known as a defeatist and counter-revolutionary. Among friends he liked to preface his strictures by calling them self-criticism, and usually avoided people who were

not friends. He considered the person of Stalin and members of the Politbureau beyond the possibility of reproach. In protecting them from the shafts of his eloquence, Ivan exercised his human prerogative of setting up sacred taboos. While he would have rebelled against all attempts to foist upon him a Czaristic taboo, he was unaware of his doing violence to his revolutionary faith by burning incense at Stalin's feet. In accepting certain dogmas, which he would have rejected if they had belonged to the counter-revolution, he was swayed by an unrealized consideration of the inconsistencies that are at the core of human nature.

The first tenet of Ivan's faith as a communist was that party membership involved sacrifice. This was a period of transition and consolidation, when discipline took first place. It was all the more necessary because his picture of the non-Russian world was a burning disaster kept from the Soviet frontier by militant communism. He saw capitalism in the form it usually appeared in the parades on Moscow's Red Square; a money bag with leering eyes, greedy fingers and a vampire mouth. The only answer to such monsters was war-time preparedness, and Stalin was the generalissimo, whose word must be law.

Ivan liked to dwell on the fundamentals of the Soviet rule:

"Communism springs from the basic laws of nature and has nothing to do with man-made artifice. Boundary-stones are man's creation, and nature has not set one nation against the other, as it is interested in humanity as a whole, not in the individual, except

in so far as the individuals are bricks of the mighty edifice. Communism follows nature's laws in affirming that, when the great end of mankind is concerned, the life of one man—or, for that matter, of many men—is of little account.

"Some people insist that such a life is heroic, but Lenin has said already that the use of this word is inappropriate, since heroism implies the exceptional, while such human conduct must be the rule. To live a life that seeks mankind's higher aims would have been heroism under the old order, but it must be made normal under the communist régime.

"As a young man, Lenin asked the question: 'What is life?' And he answered that it was a perpetuation of itself. It sounds queer, doesn't it? But it isn't! It simply means that we do our duty by adjusting our life to the interests of humanity. Someone put it in a different way when he said that we live only if we live in our posterity. That's the eternal urge for immortality."

Ivan's wife, Natasha, entered the restaurant and stood staring around her with a surprised air. It had been agreed upon that she would join us after having seen her daughter in the nursery. She was one of those young Soviet women who have a constant supply of tremendous enthusiasm for something or other. Her smooth features were animated by a never-ending interest in her surroundings. The restaurant provided her with a new object of curiosity. We signalled to her, and she joined us.

Treading on familiar ground, Ivan was now in full stride. He and his friends had discussed these very problems until the small hours, in committee-

rooms filled with the smoke of cheap cigarettes. Besides, he had become a voracious reader, and no important book on socialism was unknown to him.

After a lively discussion of the aims of the Soviets, we decided to visit a cinema, where a picture of Russian country life was being shown. In Sverdlov Square we dodged a line of official autos, passed the Opera House, then the two Art Theatres, and, rounding the new Post and Telegraph Building, turned into Gorkovo Street, which at that hour was beginning to fill with Muscovites bent on pleasure. A rustic in tattered garments gaped at the display window of a co-operative grocery store. A militiaman made an effort to explain to a country woman the mysteries of red and green traffic lights, telling her that she was not allowed to cross on red. Ivan watched me from the corner of his eyes, eager to catch a glimpse of admiration in the midst of so much splendour. Natasha's enthusiasm burst forth with a glowing: "This is beautiful." But she regretted her outburst and tried to make amends by helping a little boy across the street.

We arrived at the cinema half an hour early and whiled away our time in the large social hall, full of people drinking tea, playing chess and chatting. From the next room issued the sound of a gramophone, to which young couples were dancing. While Ivan pursued the subject dear to his heart Natasha turned to the wall-newspaper, all written by hand, recording some lurid acts of White Guard terror. One of the illustrations showed the massacre of praying Russians on Bloody Sunday in the revolutionary year of 1905. The victims had petitioned the Czar to reduce their

## MILLIONS OF DICTATORS

working day from fourteen hours. Stories of the labourers' lot under communism provided a vivid contrast.

Ivan talked about the tens of millions of Russians enjoying the benefit of the Soviets. Were they conscious of their happy lot? He admitted that some of them had not been enlightened. Many members of the older generation remembered only the glamour of their youth and forgot its terrors. Some of them were the scum of the earth—*kulaks* and other sympathizers with wealth and privilege. Slave mentality could not be eradicated entirely in a bare fifteen years. He saw the enemy busy in various disguises, as Hitlerite agents in the Ukraine, the Crimea and on the German Volga, as fascist agents trying to gain headway via Finland.

He did not close his eyes to the influence of baneful heredity. Russian apathy, a national trait under the old régime, took its last stand against the new Russian spirit of movement and work. The lazy ones blamed the Soviet rule for forcing them to break with the idle past, hoping that the golden days of vodka and knout were to return.

In order to illustrate the fight between old and new, Ivan told the story of one of the labourers in his factory.

The father of this worker had been a merchant under the New Economic Policy, the NEP, when private trading was allowed. He was a successful capitalist, who had accumulated a neat pile of gold which he buried under his house and did not mention until he felt death near. The son took possession of the money, but said nothing about it to the

authorities, although meanwhile a decree had made it his duty to do so. He began to patronize the Torgsin stores, hoarded all he could lay his hands on, acquired a gramophone, a bicycle, a huge samovar, stylish shoes and expensive dresses for his wife. He was found out, living the life of the idle rich, spending his treasure, not working, spreading stories about the Soviet leaders. . . . Ivan did not finish his story, giving me a chance to imagine what happened to the misguided Russian. Although in a foreigner's eyes the whole thing seems to lack point, Ivan found it revolting in the extreme.

Such anti-social monsters still infest the Soviet Union, he continued, but their number is on the decline. It took years to change the mind of the average man, who now realizes that there is no way back to the bourgeois positions. Who would have thought the Russians capable of such dynamic energy in saving and consolidating the proletarian country? Could Russia's plight have been more hopeless than it was during the advance of the Whites in the early days of the Soviet rule? Not only their former enemies but also their ex-allies had declared war on them, and they were aided and abetted by the adherents of the old order at home.

He visualized the horror of those days. In the South the hordes of Alexeiev, Denikin and Kornilov came rushing, bloodhounds of reaction, flogging and killing their way to the heart of the disunited country. Admiral Kolchak received the help of the powers of the East and West. Japan and the United States pursued the same aim in trying to oust the communists. Ivan remembered the huge map posters

set up, showing the advance of the White Terror. From the North came Yudenich, backed by British tanks. He was already in Krasnoe Selo and the next day might see him in Petrograd. St. Isaac's Cathedral was within sight, and he clinked his glass of wine to the successful hanging party before the Winter Palace. And then the enemy began to retreat, routed by the Red Army.

"It looked like a miracle," Ivan continued, "but it wasn't." The White Terror was partly to blame, as it had learned and forgotten nothing. The counter-revolution started on its way to Petrograd and Moscow with revenge in its heart, the divine emperor's image on its blood-bespattered flags. They were willing to give the Russian people the knout and aristocracy's drunken orgies.

But—and this was the point Ivan wanted to make—the Red Army's stunning success could not have been achieved without the co-operation of the Russian masses themselves. That co-operation was sometimes passive and consisted in not hampering the march of the Red forces, but more often it was active. Such a "miracle" could not have happened without a majority rallying to the new government. This is how a newly articulated public opinion became responsible for the survival of the Soviet régime.

Since then an even more remarkable victory has been won, and again in the face of overwhelming odds. This time the victory was won on the industrial and agricultural fronts in the two Five Year Plans. Here again Ivan had first-hand knowledge, as he had worked at Magnitogorsk. He admitted that certain extraneous factors contributed to the victory. The country



had been drummed into a martial fervour with the cry to save the proletarian fatherland from the need of depending upon potential enemies. But the transformation of Russia from the most backward country into one of the most progressive industrial lands could not have been accomplished without the irrepressible will-power of millions who poured their enthusiasm into the great adventure. Without their devotion no amount of drumming could have won the industrial war.

There was time only for one more question before the bell announced the beginning of the performance, and it was ticklish:

"If there were a free plebiscite in Russia, would it be for or against the communist régime?" I asked.

"Communism would have a majority," Ivan answered. "You could never induce the younger generation to return to the old order. While there are some older people who grumble, there is a lot of grumbling under every government. That part of the population which is still hostile to us is about to be liquidated. The counter-revolutionaries beyond our borders are notoriously incompetent. Besides, they have never been able to compose their differences among themselves, so that they have been unsuccessful in agreeing on a common hatred against us. They are more ridiculous than dangerous. The future is for the Soviets!"

The dance in the next room came to an abrupt end and in the large social hall people made ready to go into the adjoining cinema. Natasha's young cheeks were flushed with enthusiasm, as she had just read a glowing report on the progress of the crèche

that was particularly close to her heart. There was an anticipation of pleasure on the faces of the men and women who entered the darkened theatre. Impulsive Natasha gave a furtive kiss to Ivan, who thanked her with a smile, and then both of them settled comfortably on their wooden chairs.

## XII

### THE PEASANT MAKES HIS MARK

THERE was a swarm of peasants around the railway station, trying to board the local train, while others were taking a rest at the foot of the monument of Lenin shaking his stone finger at an invisible foe in the distant sky. Flowers of acacia trees littered the pedestal like freshly fallen snow. The train pulled into the station and several of its passengers made a dash for the hot-water tank, in order to fill their samovars. Others were peeling out filthy rouble notes for loaves of black bread and dried fish. Small boys with grimy fingers were hovering around the station waiting for an opportunity to steal. Some of them wore coats patched up fantastically. They appeared to be remnants of the army of stray children, pathetically ineffective in wanting to look "tough". One of them pleaded plaintively with a guard to let him alone so that he could pick destitute peasant pockets.

A couple of *mujiks* were heaving a plank to a shed with much theatrical display of work. An auto rattled up to the station, stirring up a screen of tan dust and barely missing a drunk, who waved a cheerful *dosvidanie* to its occupant.

Our car was waiting in front of a rickety cinema which advertised a lurid American film, and presently

we were on our way to the collective farm. The road was wide and bumpy, hemmed by squat houses with thatched and slate roofs. Although spring was in the air, the windows of the peasant houses were tightly shut. A furious dog sought to stop our car, barking madly, and the driver ran it down with fatalistic indifference.

We stopped in front of the bureau of the collective farm, and, while waiting for its president's return from the fields, took a look at the village. An elderly woman employee of the *kolkhoz*, the collective, showed us some of the sights. Despite her age she had a self-assurance which Russians of the older type have learned from youth, having shed the servility which characterized the *mujik's* wife under the imperial régime. Smoking her mahorka cigarette, she passed comments on life around us in the spirit of orthodox Marxian philosophy, and looked deprecatingly at a former church, now used as a village club by the young people, the *komzomols*. Above its portal a crude portrait of Lenin was displayed, concealing the religious statuary, and below the portrait a huge streamer exhorted the inhabitants: "Proletarians of All Countries, Unite!"

Part of the church was used as an embryonic anti-religious museum with copies of exhibits in the Moscow and Leningrad museums. Farther down the street we visited the village meeting room, combined with a cinema, which at one time had been headquarters of the local *starosta*, the headman. The room now used as a village office had been the *turma*, the lock-up. The walls of the building were plastered with wall-newspapers that bespoke a catholic

taste. One of their stories told about the record of a Don-region *kolkhoz*, which topped the list of new collectives in utilizing machines and fertilizers. Another strip of the wall-gazette praised Comrade X for his efficient operation of the tool shop, while Comrade Y, a young woman whose comely features were shown, deserved well of the community because of her efficient handling of the chicken farm.

In the grievance column a young contributor complained about the lack of adequate supply of books on Marxism, and another contributor suggested some changes in the irrigation system, so as to prevent underground leaks. A girl member described her experiences in another *kolkhoz*, where she found leisure better organized. She wrote that in the other place they had good travel films, useful lectures, better balls, and, on the whole, a more comradely spirit. This was an important way of expressing public opinion on everyday life.

We entered the village general store, where peasants were waiting to be served. One of them raised his voice to tell the attendant that he intended to ask his kinsman in Moscow to complain to the authorities about the inferior soap. He was a class-conscious proletarian, he said, whose duty it was to wash himself, and how could he do it with the wretched soap he got? Another *mujik* made amorous eyes at an ornate samovar, but gave up the idea of buying it when told by a neighbour that this was the kind of stuff the despised *kulaks*, rich peasants, used to buy.

Leaving the store, we entered the house of one of the collective farmers. The "best room" was

screened off as a family shrine on important occasions. In the ikon corner the Holy Trinity shared honours with a pugnacious picture of Lenin, his cap slipping in the most informal way from his powerful skull. He was flanked by Stalin and Molotov, the one shrewd and the other stiffly solemn. An old number of the *Pravda* was lying on the table. Our guide called attention to its leading article about the worries of the capitalistic countries, gaily headed for doom. The article contrasted the troubles of Europe with the marvellous progress of the Soviet Union, marching in seven-league boots.

The peasant's youngest son wanted to know if I was an engineer, and was disappointed with the negative answer. Next he wanted to know if there were wall-newspapers in America, and his lips curled into a mocking smile when told the truth. An elder son was hard at work on the model of a diminutive aeroplane, conscious of the fact that to the visitor he was "young Russia". His fingers moving nimbly, he talked of his desire to become the champion parachute jumper of the district.

Back to the office of the *kolkhoz* we went, to meet its president, Alexij Kluchovski, a youngish man of serious mien. He had the watchful alertness of the peasant on guard against the city man. Alexij was not a member of the Communist Party. He had been called to this place because of his expert knowledge of farming, and perhaps also because of his gift of gab. His softly sibilating consonants bespoke a man of Russia's western marches and not of the Don region, where we met.

Certain things in Bolshevist Russia are seldom

mentioned, and the great famine of 1923 is one of them. Alexij said no word about it, but the elderly woman did, after having run short of more suitable topics. She gave us an account of Alexij's early life, in which famine played a part.

During the World War, Alexij was still a child, living with his parents near the city of Minsk in White Russia. Although they were poor, unhappiness was not one of the permanent household guests, as they were too ignorant to be conscious of their misery. The animal pleasures of life compensated them for the monotony of animal toil. They had nearly always enough to eat, and felt almost sure of not starving, when one day their little world crumbled to pieces. Their village was evacuated in a hurry when the enemy was reported to be headed in that direction.

The family moved to the banks of the Volga, where one of their kinsmen lived. Alexij lent a hand at farm work and despite his youth he was skilful in repairing tools. The army needed food, the peasants got good prices, and once more Alexij could fill his little stomach with cheap bread.

Then came bolshevism, which was good, as the peasants took the land of the rich and divided it among themselves. At times the division was peaceful and sometimes it was not, in which case skulls were cracked and arteries were opened. Finally, all settled down to a happy life under communism, convinced that it meant long slumbers on the ledge of the warm stove and little work. But there was civil war in the country, the army needed bread, and the requisitions were strict, which peasants resented as an

intrusion. Seed became scarce, and the ranks of the cattle were thinning, requisitioned by the army or killed by the peasants to keep the army from taking them. The peasants of the Volga region were good people until aroused, when they went mad and became cruel towards everybody including themselves. Rather than let the State take a large slice of their bread, they decided not to work at all. In their efforts to commit mass-suicide, nature helped them with a devastating drought, and the famine was the end. At first the peasants did not know what it was, and then they knew. They cooked the leather of their boots, chewed straw, killed stray cats, and finally one another.

The weaker ones lay down and died, but the tougher ones continued to fight against fate. They were too weak to rave and their minds were devoid of images of horror. Impelled by an animal instinct to live, they went in search of bread. Some of them were torn to pieces by packs of dogs, which had reverted to the savage state.

Alexij's mother died and his father struck west, bound for White Russia, and was never heard of again. Alexij joined a gang of young people who reeled to the nearest railway station. The trains were already crowded with hunger refugees, hanging on to bumpers and to the tops of the cars. There was a fight for places, and Alexij found himself between two cars, his weak body resisting the maddened thrusts of earlier comers to get rid of him. At every station the fight broke out anew, and sometimes the train would take several days to make a score of miles. The engineer also was hungry, and where



was he to find food for his panting engine? A locomotive is not like a human being who can commit murder for food, nor is it a human being who can march on an empty stomach.

Young Alexij maintained his desperate foothold on the train. They were headed towards the South, and arriving at Astrakhan he roved the Kirghiz and Kalmuk steppes in search of life. He got some food, but not enough, and then he managed to get beyond the Caucasus into the rich region around Tiflis, where his body was saved. But what about his soul? Countless young people banded themselves into packs of human wolves, raiding misery for crumbs of mud-like bread. They not only robbed, but murdered on occasion, outcasts of a cruel world which had lapsed into chaos.

The inherently honest nature of Alexij saved him from losing his moral foothold. After several attempts to reach home had failed, he secured admission to an agricultural school where his brightness gained him a scholarship. After graduation he went to work on a State farm, and a political leader of the district soon had his eyes on him. When the era of collectivization broke, Alexij was already an accomplished farmer, and after intermediary occupations of less importance he was sent to the *kolkhoz* in the Don region, where we met.

Thus far the story was based on the narrative of the elderly woman. Now let us hear Alexij's less dramatic version. He remembered the native soil tilled by unwashed peasants, whose only bath was their daily sweat, their backs bent, their wind-corroded cheeks red with exertion, moving like automatons,

interrupting their work with uproarious laughter at some ribald jest when feeding time was near. Food was the main goal of their life, the essence of their ambitions, and their second goal was beastly love-making in the dim light of the oil-lamp in the ikon corner, while the children looked on and did not even wonder.

Alexij smiled at the Tolstoyan idea of innocent peasants leading a bucolic life in the abundant lap of nature. He knew that for the poor it was a life of animal exertion, while the rich had all the breaks in the world. The few well-to-do peasants of the old régime joined the exploiters who hired the sweat of the poor for a few pennies. A semi-nomadic band of floaters competed with the native population for crusts of stale bread and rotten potatoes. The floaters slept in the stables so long as they did not disturb the slumber of the cows.

What could a peasant gain under the pre-communist régime? Alexij asked. Knowledge was looked upon with suspicion, as an instrument of discontent, and schools were closed to most of the children of the village, many of whom roamed the countryside in search of a charitable teacher who would give them the elements of knowledge.

The village priests dispensed a religion which Alexij described as paganism, and sold miracle-working charms for the hard-earned kopeks of the poor. He recalled the day when the Czar passed through their village on his way to the army manoeuvres near the frontier district. The priest had told them the previous Sunday that Heaven would grant them ten more years of life if they witnessed

the arrival of the sovereign. This was the government's way of drumming up popular enthusiasm for the imperial family, so the foreign military attachés in the retinue of the august personage could report vivid stories of the Czar's popularity which would help the Russian imperial régime to float foreign loans.

The Czar passed through the village in splendour and the peasants cheered him as per instructions, when a little girl spoiled the festive spirit by throwing a bouquet at him. A Cossack thought it was a bomb, or perhaps thought nothing at all, and merely followed an atavistic urge by crushing the head of the little girl.

Alexij liked to contrast the old days with the present.

"You entered the *mujik's* house," he said, "after the family had returned from the fields. They ate their *kasha*, which looked like a combination of mud and pebbles. Whenever a child dozed off, the grown-ups kicked him awake and made him bring water for the samovar. Although women worked in the field as hard as men, they did not only all the housework but also the wood-chopping. The weaker one was, the harder he or she had to work, as the stronger ones took advantage of weakness.

"When tea was ready, it was again the men who had the first chance at it, sweetening it by sucking small pieces of sugar. In many houses, the head of the family treasured a bottle of cheap vodka, which would have burned the inside of any man. He may have sold next year's harvest to get the money for the stuff. The others watched him slump to the

floor, and then the fight started to see who should be the next to get drunk.

"At nine o'clock in the evening, when it was still light outside, all of them were asleep on the bare floor, fully clothed. As a matter of fact, the floor was not quite bare, as it was swarming with bugs."

Then Alexij turned to the nearer past. This had been a Cossack village, and it was not easy to train the spoiled riders of the steppes, the darlings of the Czar, to communist ways. They set up a strong resistance against Moscow's agents, as if they could dictate their own terms, and it took several years before their resistance could be overcome. A few of them barricaded themselves in their houses and emptied their rifles at the Moscow envoys. Others burned their grain and slaughtered their cattle rather than turn them over to the collectives. Here the most reactionary system of life was at war with the most progressive one.

The president of the *kolkhoz* did not say, but one could not help wondering, how many of the recalcitrant inhabitants of the village had died or been bundled off to Siberia or the North, there to build the Baltic-White Sea Canal.

Moscow's efforts were not fully rewarded at first. Resistance to the collectives was so strong that the region could not be nationalized at once. Some of the old hands were allowed to cultivate their lands, but gradually the majority began to realize the impossibility of holding out against the government, and they applied for permission to join the *kolkhoz*, which meant that they had to turn over their fields

and livestock to the community. A compromise was struck later, when Moscow decreed that one-family houses, poultry, a cow and a horse could be retained in private ownership. At first the *kolkhoz* tried to give its members what they needed, but later the policy of rewarding each according to his work was adopted.

In the bureau of the collective the visitor felt that he was in the executive offices of a modern industrial concern. Nothing reminded him of being in the "best room" of a rich Don Cossack of the imperial era, unless it was a few faded photos showing the owner in his most intimidating uniform, daggers and all. Alexij produced charts and figures, quoted percentages and expanded on the market value of farm products. He contrasted the smooth working of the combines with the inefficient operation of human brawn. A Chicago farm journal was lying on his desk. He spoke of stamping out illiteracy, running their crèche and taking care of their ill and aged. He sounded earnest and serenely business-like, slightly condescending only in his questions about America's privately owned farms. He could not see how practical-minded American farmers could not yet find the way to help themselves.

When asked whether in his opinion the idea of collectivism had taken deep root, he answered with a decisive yes, admitting at the same time that in certain regions of Russia the light of reason had not yet fully dispelled the darkness of ignorance. He realized that the Russian peasant was inclined to remain a slave of his past. Having been a slave so long, he could not always appreciate the blessings

of freedom. What does this new freedom consists of? Freedom from starvation, if he is willing to work and does not sabotage the work of those who want to help.

Under the old system of large estates he saw nothing but millions of poverty-stricken peasants, holding on to tiny plots of land and killing one another so as to gain a handful of black dirt. And after they had it, were they happy? No, because they had to retain it against a system which penalized hard work and served corruption and oppression.

Many peasants were at first disappointed with the collectives, in which they saw the negation of their hopes. They had thought that communism would give every peasant a large estate, and disliked the idea, propagated by the Kremlin, that the *kolkhoz* farmer was a factory worker. They wanted to remain peasants. But now the idea was fast gaining ground.

The principal question still remained to be answered: "Does the Russian collective express the desire of a large part of Russia's peasantry?"

In answering this question Alexij's testimony had to be supplemented with the opinions of others not handicapped by official positions.

If the Russian peasant were asked to-day whether he liked collective farming or private ownership, and were assured that his selection would not involve him in difficulties, he would no doubt select private ownership. The spirit of "mine and thine" is still strong in the peasant, and as he is a suspicious creature (for which he has good grounds) he never feels safe unless he knows that he has complete control of the object of his desires. So strong is the possessive

instinct of the Russian peasant that even the militant era of communism had to take it into consideration. While the city was socialized, the village became the stronghold of a new grand army of capitalism. The peasant either took or received his land, and was happy with it, until he found that his condition had not improved.

Experience has shown that you cannot break up large estates, even though they represent the most iniquitous system of land-distribution, and expect the beneficiaries to profit from the agrarian reform unless you supply them with tools and means to effect readjustments. But Russia had not the wherewithal of such a reform, and even if she had had it, the success of the venture would have been in doubt.

Besides, the bolshevist leaders have their own blueprints of the communist heaven, and private property in the village is not—and has never been—taken into their calculations. There was a time when they became keenly conscious of the inconsistency of communism in town with capitalism in the village. What were they to do? The town was a comparatively easy problem, as its inhabitants formed a small fraction of the entire population and its concentrated nature lent itself to effective police measures. But how was one to police more than eight million square miles of countryside, reaching from the Baltic to the Pacific? A hundred and fifty million peasants, armed with scythes and with rage in their hearts, were too dangerous even for the most determined *Cheka* and the *Ogpu*, the secret police.

The masters of the Kremlin consider themselves apostles of an idealistic faith. In trying to execute

the blueprints prepared by Marx and Engels they proceeded from the assumption that the rest of mankind was also more interested in a cause than in financial returns. At the same time they wanted to make Russia reach a higher stage of civilization and prosperity with all the fervour of religious apostles. Only idealists can muster so much hatred for contrary opinion as they had. Wanting to take the hurdles at a terrific rate, they blandly ignored geography, history, and the peasant mentality. They knew that if they wanted to proceed gradually they could not accomplish their work in many decades. So, being intolerant, they proceeded by gigantic steps.

In a European country this would have been impossible, but Russia is not Europe, nor is it Asia; it is Russia, and the laws applying to it do not apply to other nations. The Russian peasant had to endure so much oppression that he has become used to words of command. Besides, a submissive religious strain in him accords well with the submissive religious basis of communism, which is largely an Oriental religion.

Millions of Russian peasants stood out for private property. They are either dead or silent. More millions had not strong enough convictions to lay down their lives, and their dislike of the *kolkhoz* was not vehement enough to upset the calculations of the Russian masters. If the entire country had revolted, the Kremlin would have been forced to abandon the idea of collectivization. But the country as a whole slowly yielded to pressure. Public opinion does not always assert itself positively, but sometimes acts in a negative way by failing to put up a strong enough



resistance to permit the consummation of a result. Peasant public opinion, as expressed in passive and active resistance, lacked the punch to halt the onward march of collectivization. The idea of co-operation in farming is so healthy that it did not require too much effort of the communist propaganda to gain over a considerable section of the peasantry.

To-day the idea has largely overcome opposition and is on the way to final triumph. As the Russian village is becoming more articulate, the Kremlin derives encouragement to continue on the road that leads to collective life.



## ITALY'S DICTATORS



### XIII

#### ITALY'S AVERAGE MAN SEEKS TO HAVE A WILL

**A**BOUT Italy you can say everything and its reverse. The poet Alfieri wrote that nowhere does the human plant develop as powerfully as in Italy. It is the country of mighty individualism and of the regimented religion of fascism. The contrasts begin with her population. Sicily is both Nordic and Oriental, blended with the African. "There one may be more taciturn than a Scotchman," Count Carlo Sforza wrote, "and one is always haughty and sad, while in Naples one is dissipated and gay." The same author asserted that the Genoese are more stiff-necked than the northern English and more intent upon profits than the Jews.

The North and South of Italy represent not merely geographical locations but different cultures. The North grew up under German and Celtic influence, while in the South the imprint of Greeks, Normans and Africans may be clearly seen. Between the two were the States of the Church, a sort of No Man's Land. While the North gave the world great artists, composers and poets, the South gave it some of its great philosophers. The *Mezzogiorno*, the South, is beautiful and bleak, the home of gay

song and stark poverty, eking out a miserable living under a gloriously blue sky. It is again the very opposite of the rich *Settentrione*, the North, the soil of which is watered by rivers whose very name is poetry, the land of vineyards and orchards, the reward of conquerors from Hannibal to Napoleon.

While Rome is the centre of the oldest and largest Christian religion, the Italians are born sceptics. Tolerance is said to be an Italian trait, and yet few civilized countries can match Italy's record of intolerance. Is Italy the land of freedom or of slavery? She is probably both. It was an Italian city, Bologna, which liberated the serfs as early as 1236, but virtual serfdom on some large southern latifundia existed as late as the World War. Italians are known to be addicted to the *dolce far niente*, yet where is there a country in which Italians do not perform the heaviest and most thankless tasks? Where is the modern pyramid in the building of which Italian labour had no part? The English of the eighteenth century called the Italians the Carnival Nation, yet there is scarcely a foot of territory on the peninsula which has not been claimed from nature by back-breaking work. Lombardy, the world's garden spot, was at one time a succession of swamps.

Count Sforza is author of the statement that Italian patriotism is linked with the *municipio*, the city, and yet where else does the countryside exert a more potent influence on life and death? It was an Italian philosopher who said: "Our nation has not changed since St. Francis," and it was an Italian, Signor Marconi, who gave the world the modern

wireless, considered by many the voice of the twentieth century. It was another Italian, Macchiavelli, who said: "The multitude is more constant and wise than a monarch," and it was again an Italian, Signor Benito Mussolini, who contended: "The multitude can become articulate and powerful only through the acts of one man, the Leader." The Italian was the typical *Kultur Mensch*, a man of culture in the most exalted sense, and still it is fascism's aim to make him a *cittadino soldato*, the military man. Tolstoy wrote in his *War and Peace* that the Italian is self-assured because he is excited and easily forgets himself. On the other hand, we hear of the strong sense of dignity of the Italian.

Out of such contrary seeds fascism has grown. Is it native to the Italian soil? At the general elections of 1919 it was practically non-existent. A year later it was still negligible. Two years later Signor Mussolini was in Rome with his blackshirts. Why has fascism been so successful? "Because it has carried politics to its logical conclusion by introducing murder as a legitimate weapon to shape public opinion," one observer holds. "It introduced methods which Tammany Hall tried on a smaller scale with such signal success."

A former professor of the universities of Rome and Milan, G. A. Borgese, finds the roots of fascism reaching back to the era of Macchiavelli and the Renaissance historians of Florence, who despised the idealism of unarmed prophets and believed in the State as an arbitrary power. Tracing the black-and brown-shirted creeds to their original source,

Professor Borgese attributes its paternity to the racial and religious isolation of the biblical Jews.

Whatever its origins, it is difficult to consider fascism as something permanent, since inconstancy is the only permanent feature of Italian life. To-day Il Duce may be extolled to heaven, and to-morrow he may be hurled into political nirvana without any warning. How he has gained the adhesion of millions of Italians will be briefly sketched in the following story of young Giovanni, who will also help us to understand how he and his like have helped to shape Italian destiny.

\* \* \*

The anniversary parade of the March on Rome had brought thousands of citizens to the streets of Torino.

"To whom does Italy belong?" a deep bass voice asked, and the multitude replied:

"*A noi!* To us!"

The steps of the Stazione Centrale were black with excited country people, descended upon the Piedmontese capital to add their mercurial enthusiasm to that of the city. In the Piazza Carlo Felice the formidable chin of Il Duce, painted on canvas, challenged the thousand-throated crowd to break into sky-storming cheers. Behind Mussolini's gigantic portrait were the trumpeters who answered the fanfares of the marchers. The standard-bearers preceded the parade, followed by young *avanguardisti* wearing the city colours in their scarfs, marching with pantherlike elasticity in their rubber-soled sports shoes. Many of them were tall boys, fair of com-



plexion, typical of the Northern Italian racial potpourri of Lombards, Goths, Vandals and diverse Teutonic tribes. Then came detachments of Young Fascists, carrying real arms, conscious of their privileges and even more conscious of the barrage of warming glances showered on them. A young woman threw a handful of autumn flowers in their path. Just before they reached the Ponte Umberto, across the River Po, the paraders were joined by another column. The real celebration began when the united columns reached the faded green of the Giardino Pubblico.

The monument of Duke Amadeus of Aosta was already surrounded by a milling crowd of townspeople, intoxicated with patriotism, with the colours of the standards, the sound of the fanfares, the portraits of Il Duce, the strains of the *Giovinezza* and perhaps a glass or two of Chianti.

After the marchers had taken up their positions, the loudspeakers were turned on to transmit Il Duce's speech from Rome. The amplifiers emitted sputtering shrieks, as if Inferno were broadcasting into vacant space a weird symphony of lost souls seeking their bodies. Then there came a hush, and even the noisy sparrows of the Public Garden seem to be awed by the solemn moment. The silence was followed by the rattle of a powerful voice, which commanded, barked and chuckled, enveloping the garden and travelling off across the plains towards the Alps, the outlines of which could be faintly seen. It was Il Duce's voice, coming from the balcony of the Palazzo Venezia in Rome, where he faced an admiring army of fascists. His voice rose to a strident crescendo and then dropped to a confidential pianissimo, but

it never faltered. All Italy stood before him, marveling at her own unquestioning obedience to the man who had the courage to command.

As the voice rattled out of the amplifiers, hard faces assumed expressions of beatitude such as one would not expect to see outside of darkly curtained bedrooms. The voice thundered on, drunk with its own assurance, carried away by reflected mass-suggestion. A breeze of the Alps stole into Torino's Public Garden, light with the freshness of the freshly fallen snow of the high peaks, fluttering the standards and whistling a brisk melody into the amplifiers. Then there was a thunderstorm, as the loudspeaker registered applause in Rome, which Torino continued.

Next the local party chieftains spoke, trying to imitate Mussolini's technique while rendering him extravagant homage. Could anyone be as perfect as the Leader they described? Did Petrarca ever see his Laura as enchanting as these hardened politicians saw their idol?

Now that the crowd had spent itself in marching and applauding, had dazzled and been dazzled, it was languorously ready to give pleasure a chance. Those who knew their way had made an early start for the cafés in the park. Giovanni Ruggiero and Giovanna Saladino were sitting at the table, sipping their vermouth with carefully husbanded delight. They enjoyed the vivacious crowd and the colourful setting of the Castello del Valentino, the rich renaissance style of which was in tune with the scene. It would not have surprised them at that moment to hear the fanfares announce the arrival of His August Highness, the Duke of Savoy, surrounded by his

fantassins and standard-bearers. After the vermouth Giovanni ordered a little supper of *polenta* and *stufatino*, to be washed down with a bottle of *nocera umbra*. I was with them, and they were eager to make me see the fascist light.

Giovanni was a young militiaman of the fascist organization, and Giovanna was a member of the young women's group. He was twenty-eight, a skilled mechanic in the Fiat automobile factory, and she was twenty-three, a saleslady in a millinery shop. He was tall and his hair was light, indicating his origin as a descendant of Nordic invaders. His eyes were a luminous grey, his features clear-cut and expressive, and he had an honest face. She had that dark attractiveness in which the Italian cities farther South are so rich. Giovanni came from the village of Avigliani, a few score miles east of Torino. His childhood was spent in the shadow of a great disaster, after his father had been torn to pieces for his country when his regiment was going into reserve from the murderous Doberdo. His mother was working then in a local dynamite factory where people were blown to bits for a piece of bread rather than for their country. An uncle sent them small amounts of money from America, which helped to tide them over the worst.

Young Giovanni led the life of the poor Italian country boy on the rich plains of the River Po. Nature was kind, the fruit tasted sweet and his fingers were nimble; besides, the wealthy landowner's eyes were not always on the orchard. His mother was determined to give Giovanni some schooling, and she had made up her mind definitely not to allow

him to risk his life in the dynamite factory. She had dreams of his becoming an engineer, with an assured income and a cosy home, where she would look after him. He was her only child, a daughter having died in infancy. In Avigliani the families were not large.

Giovanni was fifteen years of age when Mussolini took the train to Rome and was invested with power by the King—an event celebrated in history as the “March on Rome”. Although the local administration of Avigliani was radical, the village remained quiet after the march. For months after Mussolini was made premier the village fathers were positive he could not succeed, because he was merely a socialist renegade. The village continued to ignore fascism until one day a group of Blackshirts put an end to the “red” administration. Those who did not say good-bye to their old loyalties were jailed or exiled, and the others were given a chance to repent.

Avigliani was now taken under fascist wings and Il Duce began to dominate the scene. It was a local teacher, a former socialist, who first discovered Mussolini's greatness by studying his skull. The teacher, who knew something about phrenology, pointed out that the form of the Leader's head revealed a genius similar to that of Julius Cæsar. His words were at first received with guffaws, which soon turned into grunts of approval as the mockers were taken away.

The squat house which had sheltered the Left trade-union branch was now turned into the *Casa del Fascio*. The village also had one of the *Fasci di Combattimento*, and the day on which Il Duce formally recognized it was a holiday. Rumour said that

Mussolini might visit Avigliani, and an old foggy in the tavern on Piedmont Lane swore that he had seen him in the village, his heavy chin covered with a dense growth of beard so as to escape recognition.

Giovanni followed the call of higher wages and set out for Torino, promising his mother an easier life. The automobile factory hired him, and he served the machine all day, adjusting to the car a gadget which looked like a pair of skates. At first he thought his back would break in two. Once or twice he collapsed with fatigue and the foreman swore at him in the choice dialect of Calabria, which he did not understand. But after a few weeks Giovanni became used to his servitude and even began to find comfort in the quiet irresponsibility of his work. He earned far more than he could have made in his native village, and part of his money went to his mother.

Looking back upon himself with the perspective of years, Giovanni now saw himself as a young animal with hardly more than a robust appetite for food and pleasure. This was, as he liked to say, before his political awakening. In his free time he frequented the cinemas, but after he drifted into the Teatro Carignano and saw *Il Pagliacci* for the first time in his life opera became his passion.

After the day's work, Giovanni had little desire to read newspapers, except on Sundays, when he liked to read stories of high adventure but not the editorials. At that time fascism was scarcely more than a name to him. Reality for him meant the machine and the staccato automatic hammers, together with his daily food and the opera. But he

could not help noticing the Blackshirts in the streets, Il Duce's name on the walls, and his pictures everywhere. Without his knowing it, young Giovanni had become grist in the propaganda mills of the Roman gods.

His work was good, and one day an assistant to the manager called him into the office, raised his pay, transferred him to a better working place and told him they were keeping an eye on him. One night soon after this, his new foreman, a Piedmontese, treated him to a glass of vermouth at the Café Ligure, and asked him whether he would not like to take an evening course in engineering. The foreman had heard at the office that Giovanni had good chances of promotion if he was willing to study in his free time. That night was a turning point in Giovanni's life. Until then he had been a part of an amorphous mass—the people, who want to eat, sleep and love. Now he discovered his ambition, and decided not to let the opportunity slip.

He also awoke politically, which he attributed to his awareness of progress in life and to the fact that some of his fellow workers were Fascist Party members. Admission to the party was closed, just then, which spurred the young man on to crash the gate. Some of his teachers at the evening course appeared before their classes in black shirts, and combined their technical instruction with excursions into sociology. One of them had just returned from a trip to France, where he had made the remarkable discovery that the French, once so contemptuous of their Latin cousins across the Alps, were developing a salutary fear at the prospect of the new Italy's

growing importance. Would Mussolini chase them out of Savoy and the western Riviera? The teacher wondered.

Giovanni began to attend fascist meetings on Sundays, and gradually he discovered his *Italianata*. He no longer skipped newspaper editorials, and became a voracious reader of stories about Mussolini's life. He also scanned the papers for evidences of Italy's growing importance in the world, identifying himself with Italy—man and country blended into an indivisible whole. He felt he was growing with Italy, and Mussolini became his special godhead, in whom he reposed the unexpended ambition of the former country boy.

In the story of his conversion Giovanni did not say whether the prospect of promotion entered his head when he sought admission to the Fascist Party. Probably it did, but he may have been unconscious of it. He did become a party member, and his initiation was impressive. He felt every word when he took the oath: "In the name of God and Italy, I swear to execute the orders of Il Duce and to serve with all my strength and blood, if need be, the cause of Fascist revolution."

Mussolini was now his deputy in arranging the affairs of the nation, and Italy his own personal property. He took week-end trips with the fascist "After Work" organization (*Dopolavoro*) in order to become acquainted with his domain. He took a personal pride in Milan's marble cathedral, in the inestimable treasures of the Northern Italian cities, the Alps and the Great Lakes. He made a special point of visiting Milan when Mussolini spoke, and

on one such occasion he happened to turn into a street when Il Duce's car swung out of it. He almost dropped dead at the sudden thrill of setting eyes on his idol at such close range.

That evening Mussolini addressed Milan's thousands from the balcony of the Royal Palace. Giovanni felt the warmth of the crowd, the joy of being submerged in it, the assurance of standing in battle-formation against the powers of darkness. He did not care to realize that he was merely one of the many; he felt the Leader's eyes rest upon him with affection, addressing him personally, exhorting and chiding him, instilling greatness into him. He felt an almost sensual love for the black figure on the balcony, vociferating into the night, and that evening he felt himself a knighted citizen of Italy the Great. He felt he was somebody; a man with a will and future. He did know that his personal freedom was limited to adulation, and that the least criticism was high treason. He did not know that the newspapers which he now liked to read were written by journalistic coolies, the glow of their words synthetically produced in the furnaces of propaganda. He did not know—perhaps did not care to know—that this was a one-way political liberty, and that going in the opposite direction would have meant prison or the loss of life.

Giovanni found himself in the midst of a dynamic world. He realized it most keenly when singing the *Giovinezza*:

Youth, youth, springtime of loveliness,  
In the bitterness of life,  
Your song rings out and away.



He engaged in sports, excelling on skis and in mountain climbing. It was on a ski excursion into the Alps that he met Giovanna, who impressed him with her health, her muscular body, and the special colours on her uniform, which indicated that she had served the party well on some trying occasion.

Work at the factory became easier, and now he was looked upon as a young man of much promise. It was hinted to him that if he tried hard enough he might be admitted to the fascist militia, and he received this honour without the usual tantalizing period of waiting. The militia commander, a retired army officer, made a stirring harangue in which he admonished them to live dangerously. The phrase appealed to Giovanni, although he hardly knew what it meant; but he found out soon enough that members of the militia were expected to take risks in the service of Il Duce and the fascist cause. The life he now led was also one of heavy financial sacrifices, since he had to buy his own equipment, and attend to party duties which claimed nearly all his free time. On week-ends and holidays he joined his company in long marches and exacting manœuvres, but he still managed to see Giovanna.

This was Giovanni's life in a nutshell. Here was the ready-made product, a thoroughbred young fascist, satisfied with a passive intelligence which found virtue in obedience and subordinated itself to Il Duce's wishes and whims. The first commandment of his creed was: "Mussolini is always right"—Il Duce, who preached a religion of endless wars!

The nationalistic religion to which Giovanni subscribed was a militant one. His Italy was supposed

to be so far superior to all the rest of the world that it could not help generating a strong, expansive force. Even the mothers were placed in war service, told that it was their patriotic duty to bring forth soldiers whose mission it was to fight and die. For whom? For Il Duce and the fatherland? What was Il Duce's fatherland? An abstract principle, in the service of which Giovanni was expected to find his apotheosis of self-destruction.

In explanation of his allegiance, Giovanni repeated the time-worn formula: "Before Mussolini there was Italy, but there were no Italians." His childhood horizon had been limited to Torino and the Piedmont. (He could not understand the language of the wounded Sicilians he met during the World War. He smiled at the lugubrious accents of the Apulian masons in his village.) In those days Rome herself was only a mystic force, into which both Italy and Catholicism entered, with the Quirinal playing second fiddle to the Vatican. In Piedmont resentment was still alive against Rome for having deprived Torino of her dues as the nation's capital. Was not the House of Savoy the creator of Italy's unity? Had not Torino been the capital for centuries?

Giovanni evidently recalled Cavour's words:

"It is more difficult to harmonize the North and South of Italy than it is to fight against Austria and the Church." He may have heard of a German writer's observation: "The great plague of Italy is her *campanilismo*, her parish-pump outlook." At fascist gatherings some of the speakers must have quoted Bakunin: "There is not one Italian nation, but five:

the church, the upper bourgeoisie, the middle class, the working class, and the peasantry."

Now, however, Giovanni said, there was not only a united Italy but there were also united Italians, conscious of their national entity, proud of their record and ready to improve upon it in the future.

At one time Giovanni had flirted with socialism. He was one of many former would-be radicals to embrace fascism. Their socialism had not been deep-seated—which may prove that the Giovannis of to-day are not yet ready to accept the loyalties of a broader humanity, and that the world must pass through still other cataclysms before they are willing to recognize that extreme nationalism is the murderer of peace and of real nationalism.

Before Mussolini the Italian parliament had been predominantly radical for nearly two-score years. Il Duce declared war upon socialism, communism, liberalism and democracy in general. While never admitting that he represented reaction, he took a stand against all that the French and Russian revolutions sponsored. His New Deal meant the end of labour's right to strike and organize itself in free unions. It meant the end of the freedom of the press and assembly, the beginning of the era of castor-oil as a political medicine, and of ruthless Scarpas. It was a reversion to the type of semi-military autocracies. No dispassionate observer can maintain that this was anything but reaction parading as progress. And yet the radical Italian nation submitted to it. This may mean either that the Italian nation was not inherently freedom-loving or

that the unquestioning solidarity of fascist Italy is not a fact.

The truth of it is that Mussolini managed to make fascism a majority religion. At first it was an organized minority against the disorganized majority, and he succeeded in imposing his rule upon the country because its democratic institutions had not taken deep root, and because a large part of the population was not convinced that the kind of democracy Italy had had in the pre-March-on-Rome era was worth fighting for. After once having lifted himself into the saddle, Il Duce's task was comparatively easy. In our days of nation idolatry it is difficult to resist a man who makes the nation an object of worship. Extreme nationalism is as much a by-product of the World War as are economic crises and tariff-walls.

Another by-product of the great war is the spirit of disillusionment, which prepared the masses for a Messiah. Giovanni's personality-worship springs from the same source as the God-seeking urge of the primitive man who needs assistance in his fight against his inferiority and the overpowering superiority of nature. The primitive proceeds to endow God with all the supernatural powers he would like to possess, and concludes an alliance with him, so that his God is a purely utilitarian divinity, exalted as an idol to meet man's urge to idealize his own needs. Giovanni's personality-worship makes the same pretence of being detached from private ends. Il Duce is invested with the infallibility and invincibility with which primitive people endow their idols.

The modern dictator is a leader because he knows

how to follow his own followers. Mussolini started out on his Fascist career as a mortal foe of Socialism. He was forced by tidal waves of public opinion to turn towards the very thing he had set out to crush. He has repeatedly declared: "The end of capitalism is here," and "Italy is no longer a capitalistic country." In spite of his appearing to mould Italy as if she were putty in his hands, it is really he who is putty in the hands of forces over which no dictator can exert control.

In Italy the old forces of democracy are merely hibernating. One day they will come forward purified. Fascism is a temporary expedient, since its anti-democratic attitude is not in line with the general trend of progress. Human evolution lies in the direction of greater freedom for the individual, not in his becoming the slave of the nation as an inhumanly murderous abstract principle.

And Giovanni and Giovanna are intelligent enough to be prepared for the rule of a higher idealism when it succeeds the dictators' day.



## BRITAIN'S QUIET DICTATORS





## XIV

### BRITAIN'S QUIET DICTATORS

NOW a glance at Great Britain's average man, *pour la bonne bouche*, as the Frenchman says; so that the reader may be left with the picture of European democracy at its best. As long as Westminster remains a symbol of popular sovereignty, the Western World is assured that parliamentarism is a living force in the most highly civilized parts of the globe. It was on English soil that the average man first became king, and tradition, which is perpetuated in the United States and the other English-speaking countries, took wings. It is all the more remarkable, therefore, that the average Englishman often lacks that degree of political self-expression which one finds in countries less democratic. "The English are dumb people," said Carlyle; "they can do great acts but cannot describe them. . . . The talent of silence is our fundamental one."

Thus the British have reared the most perfect democratic system without their knowing how it has been done. It was a German observer who once called attention to the fact that English democracy has not inspired pungent formulæ. The British have not the equivalent of the French "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity," nor Bolshevik Russia's "All

Power to the Soviets." England had no word corresponding to the French *État* and the German *Staat* as late as the reign of William III. This seems to indicate that the present State structure has not grown out of blue-prints. To put it in a few words, it is the result of the instinctive community-consciousness of the average Englishman.

How different is the average Frenchman, who is ready to launch a discussion of the political scene at a moment's notice! After having quoted Voltaire and Montesquieu—sometimes not quite correctly—your Frenchman usually winds up with a vitriolic attack on the politics of the rival denomination. He will probably make it clear as a matter of course that he expects you to be the cheer-leader in proclaiming *la France* the most perfect country. And how different is the average German, who will seek to ground his political devotion in some obscure philosophic thesis. Even if he is a Hitlerite storm-trooper of the sadistic kind, bent upon a blood-purge, he will feel the need of claiming learned authority for his deed. You cannot spend more than half an hour with a German without getting a lesson in his own brand of *Weltanschauung*. Your typical Englishman, on the other hand, believes with Burke that questions of abstract right have no place in politics. He also may believe that political wisdom will make you seek the easiest solutions as the problems arise.

But the average Englishman is not only lacking in theoretical articulateness as compared with some other nations; he is an artist of the compromise. His bent is reflected in the structure of his country. Great Britain is a Protestant country which is Catholic,

a popular democracy which is aristocratic, and a republic which is a kingdom. Unfriendly critics may say that the lack of principles makes the British addicted to compromises, while others may object that they simply lack the obsessions which some other nations call principles. The holders of this view probably feel justified in maintaining that if other countries had learned the British art of compromise, mankind would not have to mourn the loss of the ten million victims of religious intolerance of whom Voltaire spoke with so much truth. They also may point out that if Great Britain had not learned the art of compromise, to-day she might be a war casualty as a fascist or communist autocracy.

Britain has been praised and blamed for her lack of logic in the political field. But what is logic in statecraft? Is it not a futile effort to fill your sails with yesterday's breeze? If human thoughts and sentiments were subject to the laws of mathematics, one might say that logic in politics would not be wasted. But the British seem to know how inconsistent is consistency, and they like to beware of its pitfalls. Since theirs is not a direct line of political procedure with a definite goal—outside of the elemental aim of popular sovereignty—few Englishmen of stature have ever tried to commit their parties to rigid programmes.

Since the art of compromise reaches its perfection in men whose imagination does not run away with them, the average Britisher displays a certain distrust of intellectual brilliance in politics. He suspects the *prima donne* of intellect of being too clever or unscrupulous. Lloyd George was discarded for this

reason after he had served his country so well in the World War. Men of the type of Bonar Law and Stanley Baldwin seem to be the preferred statesmen.

Great Britain has built a monument to compromise in her parliament. Could any one have devised a better method of compromising hundreds of divergent interests than reducing them to two or three fundamental tendencies, as embodied in the political parties? The party system in Britain also combines the advantages of direct representation with national planning. The idea of dictatorship is repugnant to the average Britisher, because it excludes compromise and ties down the country to ironclad principles. Incidentally, his business sense and his human dignity also rebel against the idea. The average Britisher subscribes to the dictum of St. Thomas Aquinas—even though he has not read him—that under a dictatorial rule the subjects' fear easily turns into spite, and that irresponsible power spoils its wielder. He also subscribes to Cavour's belief that the worst chamber is still preferable to the best antechamber.

Even if the attitude of Britain's average-man dictator is empirical, it is coloured by sentiment concentrated largely on externals. This sentiment attaches to the forms of the past, which again denotes a compromise. The average Britisher lives to-day by projecting himself into to-morrow and pretending to enjoy yesterday. Thus Britain appears in the garb of everlasting sameness, while in reality she is the land of quiet revolutions. A rose would remain a rose even under a different name, but the average Englishman evidently thinks that a revolution is not a revolution if called by another name. He may call

himself a Liberal, at whom Conservatives look with horror, or may be known as a Conservative, at whom Labour looks with agony. But the question is this: was the Labour Party in power different from any other party? Did Ramsay MacDonald justify the fears of the die-hards? On the other hand, the Conservatives have played a leading part in extending the most progressive suffrage rights. It is axiomatic that it is a Conservative Chancellor of the Exchequer who is riding Britain's wealth to extinction. It was originally due to the inspiration of a Conservative that a Liberal Government executed the old-age pension law, and it was a Conservative government which sponsored the national monopoly of broadcasting and the Central Electricity Board—both socialist experiments. But compromise is a state of mind predicted upon a set of conditions. What are some of these conditions? What are the factors militating against an absolute rule, autocracy?

Great Britain's imperial destiny is one of these factors. A small island managing an empire of more than 13,000,000 square miles with a population of nearly 500,000,000 could ill afford to become a dictatorship. A broad basis is absolutely essential for the government of such an *imperium*, since the rulers must be conscious of a moral backing, which is the product of democracy. Moreover, the home government could not afford to maintain constant strict surveillance over the population while at the same time performing police duties on the seven seas and five continents. If you want to maintain yourself in such a realm you must develop a "master race". British soldiers must be protected with the

armour of self-assurance when they stand guard over the wailing wall of Jerusalem or try to keep Lahore out of trouble.

The great colonizing powers of the past followed an identical policy, and no sooner had they lost the broad basis for their rule than they toppled into doom. Alexander the Great was buried with his world empire because of his failure to create a master nation at home. Ancient Rome became great only after she had transferred her government from the patricians to the plebeians, and the *res publica* was an earnest endeavour at communal self-expression. After a succession of tyrants had done away with the privileges of Rome's average man, the empire crumbled to pieces. The so-called Holy Roman Empire existed mostly in name because of the lack of a great democratic principle. It never succeeded in developing into a popular institution, and remained an ornament on the escutcheon of the Hapsburg dynasty or a mere symbol.

Napoleon might have been able to maintain himself if he had created a broad basis for his power. It is true that his army had grown into a formidable force because every private carried a marshal's *bâton* in his knapsack, but the inhabitants of the Faubourg St. Antoine were not given a chance to carry their appointments as future prime ministers in the pockets of their tattered trousers, so that when Napoleon's time came to leave the scenes of his glory it was only the Old Guard that wept while the rest of France heaved a sigh of relief.

Britain has undoubtedly improved upon the methods of antiquity's most efficient colonizing power,

Rome. Her success in breeding a "nation of rulers" may have given rise to the belief that it was inherent in a master race, which confronts us with the problem of racial supremacy. Since the days of Monsieur le Comte Joseph Arthur Gobineau and the less illustriously titled Houston S. Chamberlain, Nordics have been in vogue in certain parts of Europe. In Germany of the Third Reich, the "eternal verities" of national-socialism were supposed to be rooted in the superiority of the blue-eyed Aryan. After having been humbled by the Mediterranean for thousands of years, the Nordic was now hailed as the occupant of an undisputed place in the sun.

The attempt to explain a master race by Nordic "blood" has not, however, found much favour in the eyes of serious observers. After all, it was the dark non-Nordic who for thousands of years carried the burden of civilization while the Nordic paraded his muscular body far from the sophistication of classic *Kultur*. White man's civilization took wings on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, and Egypt, the unspeakable Palestine, Greece, Rome, and the countries of Mesopotamia were the nurses of the modern man. Their arts, religions, languages, and general concepts of life live until this very day. Roman children stared at the emissaries of barbarous Teutonia as to-day's children stare at the jungle-lady with the rubber neck.

The Northern sky may receive some credit, of course, for having been instrumental in creating the modern parliamentary system. England is proud of the mother of all parliaments, while another Nordic country, Iceland, boasts of the grandmother of the

world's legislatures. The three Scandinavian countries also form part of the democratic parade, and few observers will deny that they have reached the pinnacle of culture.

On the other hand, the champion of the Nordic religion, Germany, has never had a real democracy; the Third Reich of to-day is aggressively autocratic. Even the Slavs, who are recognized by race experts as Nordic, cannot point to successful experiences in self-government. Hence, it is difficult to discover a racial basis for the success of England's democracy. The explanation lies elsewhere. Her geographic location and some other factors are responsible for the success of her parliamentary experience. Britain has been free from foreign invasion for about eight centuries, except for inconsequential French raids on her eastern coast during the War of the Roses. This privileged condition afforded the central authority an opportunity to consolidate its position long before a similar process took place on the Continent. Thus the petty tyrants, who were the little man's worst enemies in the rest of Europe, had a check upon their nefarious work. The front of English would-be tyrants was directed against the royal rule, so that they became the tools of democracy fighting autocracy. England's early parliament was not a democratic institution, but merely a bulwark of the powerful against the exactions of the sovereigns.

British democracy was given a powerful impetus under the early days of capitalism, which was constantly contriving to liberate itself from the grasping feudal magnates. The new capitalists could not work and prosper under the rule of an omnipotent



State run by a country-squire king. The great struggle between town and country ensued; while tradition aided the country, the progress of time backed the town. England's position as the source of industrial raw material decided the battle in such a way that the political victory had its repercussions on the economic life. But at that time England was society-conscious, so that fate still remained to a large extent the ruler of the island. Merit was inherent in birth and not in work. "Absolutism existed," writes Spengler, "but it was the absolutism of a class delegation. The idea of *lèse-majesté* was transferred to parliament, as the immunity of the Roman kings had passed to the tribunes."

Parliament was as yet merely a general assembly of the Empire's shareholders, whose number was small, while the common people were only *claqueurs* in the galleries. One word was writ large on the front of Westminster: "Privilege." But there came the time for the masses to be taken under the protective wings of parliament, where they inherited a valuable estate. Edmund Burke told Mirabeau: "We demand our liberties not as rights of man, but as rights of Englishmen." But those liberties were slow in being generally recognized. The Napoleonic Wars may be looked upon from the English point of view as the last effort of the privileged class to keep away the inevitable. The French Revolution is credited with having caused the great change, while in reality the French Revolution was born in England. Voltaire and his fellow thinkers took the seed of revolt from Britain to France. Yet the real awakening of democracy, as understood to-day, was still to come, and

## MILLIONS OF DICTATORS

it is recalled that as late as the end of the eighteenth century it was some 160 electors who selected 306 members of the House of Commons. The relation of the social classes was pungently expressed in the ditty:

God bless the squire and his relations  
And keep us in our proper stations.

Even at its worst, there was, however, a vast difference between English and Continental autocracy. In England it was business-like and intent upon retaining the working capacity of His Majesty's taxpayers. The government of the rich was merely an association to prevent lawlessness. The autocracy of the Continent, on the other hand, was a sadistic rule, which sought pleasure in the wilful humiliation of the "rabble", the current value of which was often considered less than that of a herd of milch-cows.

For several centuries England had a militant minority fighting for the freeman's right. John Ball, the "mad priest" of Kent, gave eloquent expression to this revolt in the lines:

When Adam delved and Eve span  
Who was then the gentleman?

The Great Revolt of 1381 anticipated the peasant revolutions of the Continent by more than a century. When Wat Tyler parleyed with the king at Smithfield, he demanded not only fiscal reforms but also the abolition of differences of rank and status. The manifestos of Jack Cade and Robin Redesdale were statesmanlike documents, written in a language which

the peasants of Continental Europe did not even dream of employing. In the nineteenth century the general assembly of empire shareholders gradually admitted the bulk of the population. The increasing national pride, laying emphasis on the free association of free Englishmen, also contributed to the revised conception of government and State. And so we have to-day the average Englishman, a specimen of whom is Charles Davis, who will speak to us for a moment.

Charles Davis was proud of being an Englishman, and in his reticent way he was aggressively average and defiantly British. In order to demonstrate that he was average, he dropped his h's both as a policy and as a challenge. He looked at foreigners with quiet disapproval, although he realized that by some incomprehensible dispensation of providence they populated a large part of this queer globe. It was with a shudder that he saw the names on the shop-signs in the darkest East End of London, while at the same time he could not help but approve of his magnanimity as an Englishman in letting these people live on Britain's hallowed soil.

Once he visited Berck Plage on a week-end trip and had a pleasant thrill at the thought that he was in the midst of so much continental wickedness. Not that he was prudish or puritanical; far from that. But when he came in contact with the great outside world he reacted with a set of prejudices partly inherited and partly acquired in the *fin-de-siècle* literature. He was also disappointed at his lack of opportunities to see wickedness at close range and was inclined to blame his honest English appearance, which seemed to keep temptation at bay.

Yet the trip was an event in his life which he liked to recall in an unobtrusive way in order to show that he did not base his conclusions about the rest of the world on mere hearsay.

Davis was a bank clerk, out of employment for a few weeks. He had been a bank clerk since he left school and as long as he made his two or three pounds a week he was contented. He had a certain amount of ambition, which, however, did not take him soaring into the rarefied atmosphere of glory where he could see himself in the magnificence of a bank manager. When seeing labourers panting under their heavy burdens around Cornhill and Threadneedle Street, where he used to spend most of his working days, he probably gave praise to heaven that his was a kinder fate.

There was in him a quiet fatalism—nearly everything was quiet in him—which kept him from strong reactions up to a certain point. When that point was reached, however, he stood up and fought for his rights. This had happened at his bank a few weeks before. For some years he had been working in the acceptances department of the bank, and few clerks knew more about customers' bills of exchange than he did. Hard times hit the bank, and the younger clerks had to be discharged. An exception was to be made with him, however, and it was suggested that he should accept a lower position in the mailing department, which had an opening. It was then that Davis stood up for what he thought to be his rights and fought, refusing to lose caste in a subordinate department, and incurring the risk of a life of poverty.

This shows beyond doubt that Davis felt himself under a social obligation to himself and the few people who knew about his unobtrusive existence. Besides, he wanted to be just to himself, and not only to others. The bank's suggestion appeared to him unjust in view of his rather long, and what he thought to be distinguished, service. While anxious to retain his social rating, he also accepted the existence of higher social classes without demur. One of the quiet pleasures of his life was the reading of the *Court Circular* and the society news. He usually got around to them in the evening, when he moved up his chair to the fireplace in the boarding-house in which he has been a star tenant for years. Between him and the higher social classes there was a tacit understanding that they would not encroach upon each other's rights. He was devoted to the royal family and found the Duchess of York an attractive royal lady. The strange light in his eyes when he spoke about her indicated that he felt for her sentiments identical to those many American young men feel for the leading cinema-star of the moment.

Davis also derived great pleasure from reading about the first nights of the Covent Garden opera season. Far from resenting the pomp of such occasions, when many a man had to go to bed with a crust of bread in his stomach, he appeared to be grateful to the social stars for bringing colour into his life. At the same time he was quite sure that he was just as good a citizen in his way as the titled ladies and gentlemen were in theirs, and he had no desire to cross their thresholds. Charles Davis was a recent convert to Labour.

We went for a walk on one of those late spring afternoons, when London makes amends for the derelictions of her disastrous weather of the winter. The town was fragrant with a perfumed air and the sun's caresses brought exaltation into the heart of even the weary of life. Oxford Street, Edgware Road and Park Lane were throbbing with busy Sunday life and even the seedy soap-box orators around Marble Arch were stimulated to special flights of oratory.

The broad vista of Hyde Park gave itself over to the festive charm with serenity. We followed the Serpentine and walked along into Kensington Gardens. On this day of spring glory even Epstein's "Rima" in the bird sanctuary had approving glances. As promenaders in their Sunday-best walked across the bridge between the Park and the Gardens their wide-open eyes took in the sight of London's myriad houses. Over this city of stone and open spaces the majestic towers of Westminster stood guard.

The object of this trip was not so much to admire spring's marvels as to find out what Charles Davis really thought about his rôle as the ruler of Great Britain and Ireland, of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, and of India. Did he know that he was a shining example of democracy, the hope of government by, of, and for the people? Did he know that the average man of no other country has scored as great a victory over potential tyrants as he has? What did he think of all that?

One did not have to spend many hours with Davis to realize that despite all his reticence he was conscious of his rôle as the real master of his country's

destiny. When placing himself on the political horizon he did not make those reservations one often hears in the United States about democracy being merely another name for political corruption. No, Charles Davis took certain matters for granted. The question whether he would fight for his political rights with arms in hand elicited from him an incredulous chuckle. Such situations were alien to England's spirit, the institutions of which stood on a solid basis. The fighting had been done centuries ago and now no one would dare touch the liberty of an Englishman. There were certain things which just simply could not be imagined even by a Labour sympathizer.

If Davis had been a German he would, no doubt, have dwelt at length upon the ethical and spiritual crisis which had determined his conversion to Labour, but he was only a quiet Englishman who dropped his h's. His interest in Labour was merely a result of a compromise between his traditionally conservative instincts and what appeared to him the exigencies of the hour, from his own personal point of view. There was nothing in him of the revolutionary spirit, which many people outside of Great Britain associate with socialism. As a matter of fact, he did not like to call himself a socialist; he was Labour. He continued to think along traditional lines when he decided to transfer his allegiance to the new party. After all, social needs are constantly changing, and many of the points Labour urged appeared to him common sense and in harmony with the needs of the times. Above all, social justice must be re-established, and when referring to it he probably

thought about his affair with the bank. While he realized that he had no business to concern himself with other people's affairs, he knew well enough that without the necessary degree of community-mindedness the aims of social justice could not be accomplished. His individualism was coloured by a powerful urge to reach his goal in a team. This led us to the question of regimentation *à la* fascism.

"It is unthinkable in Britain," Davis commented, "and even Sir Oswald Mosley's followers never thought that their rule would be anything like the Italian and German régimes. Their influence is on the wane, after having had a momentary vogue in a limited circle. There are all kinds of fools in this world and you can nearly always find a handful of them to applaud any nonsense. People like to laugh at political antics, and Sir Oswald's audience had its fun. But the fascists would have to find a better substitute for parliament than no parliament at all. It is our great national institution, which has worked fairly well so far, and we shan't abandon it. It is not without faults, but what political institution is? Up to the end of the World War the Conservatives and Liberals represented the two principal political forces fairly well, and when the balance of these forces changed, in came the Labour Party, which has no intention of deserting parliamentary rule. If there is to be a strong Communist Party in Britain, it will also stick to good old Westminster.

"An Englishman may not always know how to express himself, but he more or less knows what he wants and how to get it. A prime minister trying to turn over to the crown any part of the people's



rights would find himself without an office in no time, although, as you know, we are attached to our royal family and even Left-wing Labour does not care to have it turned out of Buckingham Palace. I believe that the court itself would refuse to have its powers increased, as our kings are English enough to know what is coming to them. The sense of right is born with the Englishman even if he doesn't always care to discuss it."

It required some coaxing to engage Davis in a conversation about the prospects of Great Britain's career as the home and hope of democracy. Attempts to fathom future secrets are bold adventures in a constantly changing world, and he knew it. What forecaster of twenty years ago would have dared to foretell only one-tenth of the changes that have occurred since then? And yet the world is echoing with the cries of those who set their horoscopes in the market-place.

We discussed Leon Trotsky's assertion that Great Britain was ripe for a communist revolution. What was an average man's reaction to the talented bolshevik's prediction that New York and Moscow would be engaged in a struggle for London's soul, and that Moscow would floor its foe? "An absurd idea," Davis remarked, and refused to be drawn into a further discussion of the subject. His opinion about the prophecy of André Siegfried was scarcely less emphatic. The brilliant French analyst had expressed the belief that Great Britain would be reduced to the status of a fifth-rate power, because of her slowness in adjusting her economic system to a fast world-tempo. "Where will he find his first-rate power?"

Davis asked. "Besides, England has always come back. No nation can remain forever in the pink of fighting condition. The most important thing is always to have sufficient excess reserve for the comeback." He expressed himself in agreement with the conclusions of Harold Laski, Labour theoretician, that Great Britain was on the way to abolish the capitalistic rule of uncontrolled competition and unplanned production.

Davis lent a sympathetic ear to the idea that in spite of some temporary successes of reaction in the form of fascism, history shows a definite tendency towards the extension of human rights for the benefit of a more intensive cultivation of man's individuality. Fascism was a mushroom growth in countries lacking historical coherence, but it has made no inroads into the fields of real democracy. Signor Mussolini was wrong in claiming that fascism was the greatest political thought of the twentieth century; the historian of the future will look upon it as a mere side-show, the product of an age of transition, looking for salvation both in heaven and the garbage-can.

He also concurred with the view that even Mussolini's and Hitler's régimes are affected by the democratizing influence of the age. He admitted readily that the two outstanding fascist dictators did not belong to the former privileged classes. Mussolini had been a bricklayer in Switzerland and Hitler had been a bricklayer in Austria, and neither of them was ashamed of his proletarian past. In that they are different from Napoleon, who was eager to make people forget his origin. Mussolini could easily have deposed the Italian king and taken the crown himself;

but he did nothing of the kind, as he realized that by taking the throne of the House of Savoy he would lose the throne he had won for himself as a man of the people. Hitler probably also knew what he was doing when he refused to assume the president's title after Hindenburg's death.

Davis pointed out that democracy in England has again proved its adaptability to changing conditions. The British cabinet is invested with strong executive powers, with which it is in a position to work out large-scale plans if need be. During the great economic crisis of the early thirties, Britain managed to get along without resorting to emergency legislation of the kind which several democratic European countries had to introduce. In Great Britain neither the prerogatives of parliament nor the privileges of the cabinet were curtailed. Both of us agreed that while England has some appalling cases of poverty, especially in the mining and certain industrial districts, her average man is still confident that he, acting in concert with his kind, rather than a dictator, can and will solve his problems. Great Britain's average man has refused to be tempted by the alluring words of would-be saviours parading in shirts of various colours, with the result that the little man has not lost any of his hard-earned prerogatives and is still the King.

# THE APOTHEOSIS OF DEMOCRACY

## A WORD ABOUT PUBLIC OPINION

**A**FTER having presented these specimens of dictatorship it will be our task now to touch upon some pertinent questions. Since the rule of the average-man dictator is a reflection of public opinion, we shall make a brief inquiry into its nature. It will also be of interest to ask whether the average man of to-day is more of a dictator in his nation's life than his father was yesterday. Lastly, we shall say a few words about the influence of the average man on current history.

There are two leading theories. One names the hero as the primary force of history. The other names the masses. The first received its most plastic form in the hero-worship of Carlyle, while the latter was given pungent expression in the historical materialism of Marx. The first said that, like clay in the potter's hands, events were formed by the hero. While not denying that history followed certain sovereign tendencies, Carlyle's disciples credited the heroes with carrying out their designs in a framework of historical necessity. According to them, it is the genius who is responsible for national characteristics. The second theory takes the opposite view, and calls Carlyle's heroes villains who foist their interests upon

the masses and make them the victims of a gigantic deception. Adherents of this school find that humanity's great battles are fought for the benefit of a minority. The Marxians believe, however, that in the end the interests of the masses prevail.

In making our choice between the two theories, history must be drawn upon. Have the tribes of the early days and the nations of to-day lived in compliance with a conscious or instinctive policy of self-preservation, or have they been the pawns of strong-willed individuals?

It would be presumptuous to try to go into the details of the problem, than which there are few more complex. We do not even know as yet whether the component part of tribe and nation, the individual, lives his own life or that of his fate. This is the eternal question of determinism and voluntarism. Is our will free, or is it free merely to move in accordance with inexorable physical and psychical laws? Even if we accept the free-will view of the voluntarists, the question arises as to how a nation may be actuated by the free-will of millions of sovereign units. Could they remain true to their dominating nature by subordinating it to a paramount cause? On the other hand, if man is moved largely by forces over which he lacks control, how can chaos be avoided in correlating millions of distinct fates in the larger unit of the nation?

Was there not wisdom in Frederick the Great when he wrote to Voltaire: "In this miserable world it's Holy Majesty Accident that is responsible for three fourths of history"? But, even though it was one of Carlyle's greatest heroes who contradicted his

principle of hero-worship, we should not be deterred from analysing the evidence. Is the world any different to-day because Alexander the Great once marched into Africa and Asia? The answer must be a decisive "No!" Nor is the world essentially different because of Julius Cæsar and Napoleon, though they dominated the scene in their lifetime. From a historical point of view they were mere meteors, who lit up the sky and disappeared, leaving only memories of a spectacle.

But ancient Greece is still alive to-day, having left her mark on the world with a new approach to the great problems of the State. Because of her, man's thinking has grown beyond the narrow horizon of pre-Athenian days. In the soil of Hellas germinated the modern idea of law. Classical Rome also left her mark upon the world, not merely as the capital of a great Empire, but as an experiment in aggressive statecraft. Even to-day the influence of her vast genius may be traced along the frontiers of the classic empire, beyond which life still has another undertone.

Feudalism and capitalism have changed the face of the earth, and so have the great philosophic and moral systems comprised in religions. Socialism is one of the great living forces of to-day, alike in countries where it is enshrined in parliaments and in countries where it is outlawed. Is it the brain child of one man, as some of the followers of Karl Marx insist, or is it the expression of a mass will? There can be little doubt that the idolization of Marx as the sole source of socialist wisdom is at variance with the socialistic conception of historical materialism.

Nor is the belief tenable that, without the old German with the shaggy beard, capital would be undisputed master in all countries. There was socialism before Marx, and necessity would have evolved it further even if he had never lived. It would be just as difficult to pin the authorship of feudalism and capitalism to any one person. They are the voice of opportunity finding expression in great popular conceptions. They show the mass-man in action, responding to obscure impulses, often working himself into an idealistic frenzy for materialistic causes. Through them, millions of fates are decided. These great movements came into stride through the operation of public opinion.

What is public opinion? It is one of life's great mysteries, changing with era and latitude. In the streets of Paris it follows laws different from those which it observes on the Russian steppes. Let us glance at it for a moment in one of its most picturesque manifestations. Nowhere does it crystallize more rapidly than in the French capital, where it is backed by tradition and congenital *élan*.

If you wish to become acquainted with it, visit the outlying districts where *le peuple* lives. Take a walk in the tortuous streets of the Mémilmontant quarter, behind the incongruously gay cemetery of Père Lachaise, or climb to the Belleville district on your way to the Buttes Chaumont. Then stop at a combination bar and café, the *bistro*, at any street corner and observe the doings of Jacques Bonhomme.

He is about forty years of age, living near the Porte des Lilas, the master of one child and the slave of one woman. His wife is a *concierge*, and as such



a female Caligula and Ivan the Terrible rolled into one. At home, Jacques Bonhomme is a henpecked husband, but in the *bistro* he is an intrepid talker. He is undersized, and he gesticulates from his shoulders. His checkered cap is drawn over his right eye and his woollen shawl protects his throat. His trousers are baggy; his overcoat is threadbare. When there is work he is a factory-worker, and when there is not enough work he is a self-appointed statesman and the saviour of his country. In other words, Jacques Bonhomme is a typical man-in-the-street of Paris, although he firmly believes he is the centre of the universe, which is true, of course, from his own limited point of view.

"*Eh, bien, les copains,*" Jacques Bonhomme begins his daily talk to his companions in the *bistro*, with the self-satisfied smile of the man who knows that he has an audience. Something must be fundamentally wrong with the world, he continues, if a man cannot have his daily litre of *vin rosé*. Jacques Bonhomme presents the problems with rapidity and solves them with precision. If the working-man has not the means wherewith to quench his thirst, if the weather is inclement and *'itlère* is in power in Germany, the responsible ministers of the Third Republic are to blame. *À bas le gouvernement!*

There are times when Jacques Bonhomme swings a threatening fist at the Chamber of Deputies or mounts the barricades; it is a cherished habit with him. Being a Frenchman and an individualist by nature and by choice, he is convinced of his inalienable right and ability to arrange the affairs of the world according to his ideas. Having learned at school

the tenets of the Revolution, he knows that human society is a community of free individuals binding themselves together by voluntary agreement for a common purpose. If, in his opinion, the ministers of the republic fail to live up to their obligations, he has a right to cancel the social contract and enforce a new one. Being proud of the Revolution, he strives to be worthy of its heroism. In this he differs from the German in the street across the Rhine, Michael Spiessbürger, who looks for a man in uniform to give him orders in case of trouble. He is also different from his much more respectable neighbour across the Channel, Soames Forsyte, who tries to solve his difficulties through compromise.

Early in February, in 1934, Jacques Bonhomme was one of the tens of thousands who marched against the Chamber of Deputies. His favourite newspaper had been telling him for months that the deputies and their dummies, the ministers, were responsible for all the ills that had befallen mankind in the last few thousand years, beginning with the plagues of Egypt and ending with the railway catastrophe of Lagny. As he marched, Jacques Bonhomme underwent an incredible transformation; he became thousands of years younger. In his native surroundings near the Porte des Lilas, in the Paris of the Third Republic, he was a man of some reason and discrimination. As a member of the mass, he became a primitive savage, driven onward by atavistic instincts over which he had lost control. At home he always took good care not to burn his finger with a match; here he was ready to face the bullets of machine-guns.

"By the mere fact that he forms part of an organized crowd," writes Gustave Le Bon, the best-known expert on mass psychology, "a man descends several rungs on the ladder of civilization. In private he may be a cultivated individual, in a crowd he is a barbarian—a creature acting by instinct."

Jacques Bonhomme is no longer conscious of his acts; he is hypnotized. A meditative, stolid and sedate individual in private life, he becomes impulsive, mobile and irritable as part of the mob. He is the unknown Napoleon, ready to dazzle the world with a display of unexpected heroism.

The mass soul, *l'âme collective*, is different from the individual soul. The kindly Dr. Jekyll may turn into a horrid Mr. Hyde in a crowd, and the ruffian may rise to heights of selfless exaltation. The Romans knew about this metamorphosis, when they coined the winged words: *Senatores boni viri, senatus mala bestia*. The Senators may, indeed, be good fellows and yet the Senate, as a corporate body, may be a "vicious beast". Max Nordau, a man of great penetration, once asked what a group of men like Shakespeare, Newton, Goethe, Kant and Helmholtz would do if confronted as a group by a political problem. He reached the conclusion that they would be swayed by mass emotions.

Public opinion is a rushing torrent, fed by sources of obscure origin. The press and platform are accounted its most potent sources, but the tatterdemalions of the Faubourg St. Antoine could not read and had little chance to hear inflammatory speeches when they launched their attack against the Bastille.

"It's in the air," simple people say, sensing an

all-pervasive force. They probably feel that in the formation of public opinion reason enters only as the handmaid of sentiment, coloured by passion. The modern dictator does not even try to stay the onward march of mass aggression. On the contrary, he says that parliament is not its true reflection, as it is vitiated by the perverting influence of powerful groups. "I am the voice of the mass!" he declaims, meaning that he has the faculty of telling what people really want, without being the slave of special interests.

In normal times public opinion is strongest in the middle classes, which are neither too exhausted to think nor too pampered to be indifferent. In the pre-war democracies of Europe they had predominating influence. Sometimes, however, public opinion causes an explosion in a lower social stratum which has reached the end of its patience. Geography also seems to make some difference. It is most highly developed on both shores of the North Atlantic, partly because of better opportunities of exchanging ideas and partly because of older traditions.

Public opinion has undergone a basic change since the war. The great conflict saw the massing of different classes in the trenches. While army life did not encourage anyone to think or feel, the variety of human types and occupations served as a stimulant to both. Besides, the war mentality could not help making the soldiers "mass-conscious". It put ideas into their heads. It was in the trenches, facing death, that the peasants of Russia, Rumania and Hungary first heard of their rights, for which they were supposed to be fighting. The propaganda machine of the belligerents revolutionized hundreds

of millions of people without meaning to accomplish that purpose.

America was fighting to make the world safe for democracy. England's object was to make her soil fit for heroes to live upon. France was fighting the battle of light against darkness, of freedom against tyranny. Germany was in arms against slave-holding England and rapacious France, so that her citizens might have a place in the sun. Austria and Hungary declared war on Czarist autocracy and Italian perfidy, so that they could enjoy the rule of an enlightened and peaceful monarch. Russia's war was waged against an aggressively imperialistic combination of powers.

At the same time, what post-war public opinion gained in surface it lost in depth. Take for instance the case of Russia. Under the old régime, the *mujik* was hardly more important than mud on the boots of Their High Excellencies and Their Highnesses. For them to ask the peasant what he thought of great problems would have been as absurd as to ask the ants of the plains what they were thinking about. The peasant was a passive subject of misgovernment, and if he dared to move in an attempt to shake off the parasites he was simply hanged or beaten to death.

Compare the position of the Russian peasant to-day, as a molecule of public opinion. He cannot go into his fields without being haunted by the words of Comrade Stalin, dispensing praise and blame. His children are grist for the vast propaganda mill, and the countryside is made to read newspapers. The radio, the theatre, the cinema and opera are

instruments of propaganda, the object of which is to convince the *mujik* and make him a faithful adherent of the bolshevist régime. But can there be any question of public opinion in the old sense of the word when it is synthetically produced at the behest of dictators? The answer is that even dictator-made public opinion is an inducement for people to ask themselves questions, and wonder. At the same time, dictators like to make use of these questions and criticisms to gauge popular reactions.

The point is, however, that by spreading across vast surfaces of territory, public opinion becomes shallow, so that whatever it gains in extension it loses in depth. Perhaps nowhere in Europe was it deeper than in the exclusive intellectual circles of pre-war Russia. Compare it with public opinion in the same circles of the Soviet Union, and you soon discover how stereotyped their views are. To-day an intelligent peasant convert to the creed of the Moscow propaganda machine talks almost as fluently and uses the same *clichés* as the intellectual. High-minded individualism has yielded to mass-minded collectivism.

The situation is identical in other parts of Eastern Europe, although the contrasts are not so violent. The voting cattle of pre-war days have become the idol of the up-to-date politician. Dictators and semi-dictators pander to the peasants of half a dozen countries between the Baltic and the Black Sea. Signor Mussolini went among the peasants to lead the offensive in the battle of wheat. The farm programme occupies a prominent place in the political creed of national-socialist Germany. The word

peasant, which used to be a term of opprobrium, has become a hall-mark of nobility. In the Third Reich, *Bauer* is the title of the aristocracy of the soil. In countries where parliament has not been discarded, peasant parties play a prominent part.

The peasant says, now: "I want this." In the past he was heard to whisper: "May I have this?" In the more distant past he did not even dare to whisper, but fell on his knees in the presence of his masters. Although he may not be as powerful as he thinks he is, he has the courage to-day to think he has power, which is already a step towards self-assertion.

Paradoxically, the spreading of opinion in countries where it used to be limited to the *élite* has furthered the cause of the dictators. Bewildered by the complexity of modern life, the recently articulated social classes accept the offer of the Strong Men to take care of them. This applies not only to Russia but to Germany and Italy.

Before the war the German Reich was the home of a highly literate population with a propensity for specialized work and little capacity for self-government. After the war the German leaders tried to form a *mésalliance* of political illiteracy and democracy, but they failed, as public opinion was not prepared to proceed at such speed. Then came Hitler, who took advantage of the immature political thinking of the majority to impose himself upon the masses, becoming the symbol of the German Everyman, the living expression of a new political-mindedness.

In Italy parliament was functioning before the war, but it had not proved an effective spokesman of

collective ideals because of the absence of public opinion on a national scale. Mussolini took advantage of the feebleness of democracy and appointed himself spokesman of the formerly inarticulate masses.

In view of the foregoing, can the statement be maintained that Russia is just what the majority of its population has wanted it to be, and that both Herr Hitler's Third Reich and Signor Mussolini's fascismo express the public opinions of their countries?

It is easily conceivable that the Russian White armies could have scored over the Reds in the course of the Civil War. What would have happened if Denikin and Kolchak had won and given Holy Russia a new Czar? No doubt there would have been a bloody White Terror and a continuation of the Emperor's traditional rule. But this would have been only a matter of a few years or decades, as an intractable imperial régime would have re-created the conditions which had helped the bolshevists to reach power. In the long run, therefore, the result would scarcely have been different.

Let us now take Germany's case and assume that Hitler told the truth in warning the country that the communists were on the point of seizing power when he was given the helm. What would have happened if Germany had preferred the Third International to the Third Reich? We leave such incidents as the religious persecution out of account, and speak merely of fundamental changes. It is not likely that the communists could have carried out a policy more communistic than their mortal enemies, the Hitlerites, have done. The state control of industry, commerce and agriculture, for which



the Third Reich is responsible, is, at any rate, more collectivistic than the measures their socialistic predecessors tried to put across.

The same is true of Italian fascism, which was meant to be a life-saving device of capitalism but turned into a crude attempt at state socialism instead. This means that even without Hitler and Mussolini history would have taken essentially the same turn, since it follows the promptings not of one man but of the masses.

Does it mean, too, that the average man in the dictator-ruled countries is more a dictator than his father was before the war, when dictatorship was not so much in flower? Yes, it does. Take the case of pre-war Germany. It had a Reichstag, elected by universal manhood suffrage, which ought to have been the mouthpiece of public opinion. Yet it was not, since it lacked the right to call the government to account and shared its power with a more influential Bundestag, which was the mouthpiece of the German princes. More extensive powers were lodged in the Landtag of the Kingdom of Prussia, which comprised two-thirds of the German land. But the Landtag was under Junker domination because of its electoral system. Ultimate power resided in the chancellor, who was appointed and dismissed by the emperor. And the ruler who boasted of being his country's master by the grace of God was in reality the representative of the land-owning magnates and of the army.

*Unser Kaiser absolut  
Wenn er unsern Willen tut.*

Indeed, the emperor was absolute only in so far as he carried out the will of the privileged classes.

Hitler himself came into power in alliance with the land barons and with the consent of the army. He did away with parliament and set up an openly dictatorial régime. He had not been in power long, however, when forces began to assert themselves against which he as well as his aristocratic and military backers were helpless. The autocrats who had put him on the throne began to discover with dismay that their puppet was guilty of indiscretions which they could not condone, although at first they thought he was merely playing theatre for the benefit of his followers. As a matter of fact, the *Führer* had the wish to be theirs, but the powers of public opinion he had conjured up conspired against him. He was the slave of forces which he had thought would blindly follow his instructions.

Dictators try to do many things, but they cannot go ahead making promises indiscriminately and then simply repudiate them. The power of modern public opinion is such that it makes a reluctant dictator the slave of his own eloquence. Operating under sham policies serves only as a temporary device and in the long run even the dictator must submit to his avowed policies. The influence of to-day's average man on history is real.

## XVI

### THE LITTLE DICTATOR

**I**S our average-man dictator a god or a beast? This is the great question of the age. No government is more than an admission of failure until it fathoms the secret of the mass. The cynical view is that government is the making good of one error by committing another. In fact, nations glorifying the policy of "muddling through" have been the most successful ones, as shown by the examples of classical Rome, Great Britain and the United States.

The atom of government is the average man, and he is both god and beast. Read about him in your daily paper and try to keep out of the insane asylum! Is it possible that he who penetrates the stratosphere should be the author of so much monstrosity? Put a demagogue on the platform, give him a strident voice, strip him of modesty, and immediately he is surrounded by a crowd of admirers. In his audience there may be at once murderers and winners of the Nobel Prize, now joining together in crying: "He is our saviour!"

What does the newly found saviour offer? It may be a consignment of national honour to be gained at the expense of the dignity of a nation, deprived of its freedom to dispose of its own fate.

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Or it may be naked lust in the shape of gold, without patriotic trappings. The saviour-demagogue may be the agent of a handful of men controlling public opinion, pulling invisible wires. Look at the human herd which trails him, gaily marching to gigantic lynching parties in the name of patriotism, killing their like in sudden bursts of animal heroism. Can you dignify them with the name of man? Should this sacred name not be reserved for those who try to resist the beast in themselves, damning a mad universe which rushes headlong into mass suicide? Can you call them dictators?

Before answering this question, look at mankind's anointed dictators in the past and present, look at all the patented martyrs and saints, at the heroes of battlefield and parliament. What do you find? How many of them were really sacrificing themselves for the community? Try to keep them from making this sacrifice, and see what happens! Yet a foolish mankind believes they are its saviours.

Analyse them and you make a startling discovery. They are made of the same stuff; seekers of grandeur, power-addicts, megalomaniacs. They are standardized products, lacking nuances because of their overpowering obsession. It is only their poor biographers who succeed in finding "noble purposes" and "guiding principles" in their lives, engaged in a conspiracy to create a myth as unlike the original product as this year's Miss Universe will be unlike the same lady sixty years hence. The heroism of the real heroes is taken with them into unmarked graves. They cannot be looked for in the ranks of the dictators, and are hidden from gaze. They are the forgotten

sings of the earth, the casualties of hope. They try to think, but more often they merely feel, and they demand no payment for their noble impulses. Their lives are sagas unwritten, unsung and half-lived. They form only a fraction of the grand army of the millions of dictators, and are mentioned only to show that in the multitude there are unknown heroic lives. For their sake man can be forgiven, and the average man can be glorified.

In giving a thumbnail sketch of the average-man dictator we dwelt repeatedly upon his need to set up idols. For thousands of years he has created gods in his own image and worshipped them for fear of being left alone in the world, haunted by memories, trembling at the thought of the unknown terror of the end. The World War created a great reversion of this religious sentiment. Seeing the hecatombs of dead on the battlefields, millions parted company with their traditional idea of God. Millions of others, not daring to admit they had lost their spiritual anchorage, kept on clinging to rituals without any real belief in the essence of religion. Needing some moral support, the average man brought his God from heaven and conferred upon him the decorations of his own dubious bravery. So the modern dictators are subjected to a veritable barrage of adoration. They are reflections of mythical forces in action, supporting myriads of timid souls in their search for greatness.

But, although the millions of dictators are swayed by obscure forces, they are beginning to be interested in their own lives. They have now a more acute sense of a changing world and their place in it than

they used to have. Even the formerly non-political strata of mankind have been affected, in Europe more than elsewhere. There is more thought and discussion of political problems than ever before. Youth has been imbued with a spirit of its own importance and is infected with a veritable epidemic of world-saving ideas.

The war brought home the importance of economic factors to the average man. Until then the majority took the machinery of everyday economics for granted. They knew that money would buy their daily bread and butter. But the war came to Europe and in most countries butter went out; one had to stand in line for bread. The prime necessities of life were rationed, and national economy became the concern of every man.

Money had been one of those economic factors of life with which only experts bothered. When the value of money began to decline in the belligerent countries, the man in the street paid no attention, as he did not know what it was all about. For him money was a set quality and he could not imagine a change in its value. Then one day he woke up to the realization of the monetary catastrophe that had struck most of Eastern and Central Europe.

Such dramatic incidents proved to the average man the close connection between his life and economic problems. First he was bewildered, then slowly a glimmer of understanding dawned on him. A cry arose for economic self-sufficiency. In an effort to forestall the possibility of running out of raw materials in the next World War, nations began to make themselves independent of their neighbours by coaxing

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their soil into producing the wherewithal of life with redoubled energy and providing substitute raw materials. The age of economic isolation had arrived. Tariff-walls rose to prodigious heights and even formerly free-trade countries went in for protection. Politics and economics became closely associated in the supposed service of the various fatherlands.

A few words about the national characteristics of the average-man dictator: As no two men are ever the same, so no two groups of men can be the same. Heritage and environment condition the life not only of the individual but also of the nation. In the course of centuries these differences have been fostered. National characteristics do exist, much as we may dislike such broad standardization.

Take the case of the average man of the United States. He enjoyed the great advantage of being safeguarded from the intrusion of politics. He was so busy with more essential things that he either used politics as a means of livelihood or had no use for it at all. He did take an interest in politics when presidential elections came around, but even then he was more concerned with the label of the nominee and his private life than with a political cause. In his lack of interest there was the cynical admission that politics was an inevitable evil, a super-racket. He took no steps to stop the evil for two main reasons: first, he was too busy to bother, and, second, he believed that in the long run the Constitution would settle everything.

In other words, American life laid emphasis on the economic and not on the political problem. By making money the pivotal question life was simplified.

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Money was often the gauge not only of material values but also of spiritual ones. As a result, many Americans looked at the Capitol in Washington with the same amused tolerance they displayed when watching monkeys cavorting in their cages. They were confident that they were having their money's worth in amusement, and that no amount of political noise would do harm to such a rich country as theirs. This belief was supported by the conviction that the system of checks and balances would prevent any would-be usurper of authority from gaining complete ascendancy. The average American was convinced that, by withholding final authority from his elected representatives, he was in a position to prevent their falling into a tyrannical mood.

Much of this indifference in politics was no doubt a healthy reaction to Europe's over-insistence upon it. Since American democracy was built upon a revolt against Europe's ways, there survived a tendency to perpetuate the conflict by doing the very opposite of what Europe was doing, firm in the belief—which was often justified—that in that case America could not go wrong. American big business gave powerful encouragement to this tendency. It was anarchical in its refusal to let the government do anything beyond protecting its privileges and collecting the amounts due on its bills. Big business thus extolled anarchy as the great American virtue, and decried all who opposed it as communists and, oddly enough, anarchists.

But there came a time in the early thirties when this general attitude began to undergo a fundamental change. To-day America is definitely becoming



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political-minded. Certain tendencies in Washington went against the grain of powerful vested interests, which thereupon decided the time had come to take politics seriously. The attacks to which the national administration was subjected reminded observers of the most hysterical outbursts of European partisanship.

Turning to the average Frenchman as a political being, what strikes us most is his conservative radicalism. The Frenchman is famed for his logic and temperament. Sometimes the latter gets the better of the former, and then a royal spectacle is enacted. A distinction should also be made between the quiet liberalism of the countryside and the rowdy nationalism of the most vocal elements of Paris. In France the fight between town and country shows the capital on the conservative and the village on the progressive side of the barricades.

The Frenchman considers the government a Moloch demanding his life in the form of his savings. Although he loathes the insatiable Treasury, he finds his government essential to protect his soil, which he regards as the most desirable in all the world. He usually elects radical deputies, who use the language of the Revolution and are conservatively cautious in their votes. The average Frenchman is still conscious of the fact that he has wrested power from the aristocrats, and he means to stand guard over his rights.

The Frenchman's neighbour across the Rhine is an entirely different creature. The German is unversed in politics, lacking both in training and aptitude. Before the World War, he was the subject of the tyrannical solicitude of a benevolently autocratic

empire. He is a formalist, which quality finds expression in his love of so-called law and order and also in his explosive admissions of aggressive timidity. The blustering Prussian compensates for his shyness by shouting his defiance to the world. The aggressions of the two Napoleons made him realize the advantages of completing the powerful military machine which he began to build in the eighteenth century.

Germany has two faces, as have most other countries. The Weimar Republic was one kind of Germany, and Hitler's Third Reich is the other kind, so that the French are justified in saying that national-socialism is *la victoire des Boches sur les Allemands*. But German national-socialism is something more than religious persecution and political intolerance. It was meant to be a force to unite all Germans, irrespective of State boundaries and social classes. This nationalism is intolerant and exclusive, and added to Prussia's proverbial rudeness it gave Hitlerism its objectionable character.

Russia is a country trying to find her soul. It would be exaggeration to say that communism has been sold to all Russians. While the younger generation knows no other régime, the older generation is rent by doubt. To impose a communistic faith upon Russia has turned out to be more difficult than to reintroduce a militaristic-nationalistic faith into Germany. To be a good communist requires so much perfection that one seldom finds it in man. Communism can become a real success only in a nation of heroes. Man is still a greedy creature, and communism abhors greed. Man is still acquisitive, and communism excommunicates acquisitiveness.

Communism has scored in its materialistic and not in its idealistic appeal. It is popular when it offers an assured living to every worker, but not when it tries to convince the adult masses of the benefits of community-mindedness. The more fully man becomes acquainted with his true nature the less reason he sees to make sacrifices for his neighbour.

Capitalism appeals to man by exalting greed into a virtue. It is the product of human nature, while communism is the anticipation of human nature as it may become some hundreds of years from now. Besides, communism, as practised in to-day's Russia, is a contradiction. It demands an intelligent approach to great problems and yet closes the way by making criticism treasonable. Finally, the Russian variety of communism is not only communism but also Russianism, which is no compliment. Russian inefficiency and cruelty have been perpetuated under the present régime, despite its crusade against both, showing that human nature cannot be changed even at the command of the all-powerful Kremlin.

Surveying our little dictators, a word is due also to the Italian variety. It seems that under Signor Mussolini's rule the Italians are not playing their part, and are doing violence to their real nature. It is perhaps for that reason that under the fascist rule Italian genius has been so sterile. If given free scope, a large number of Italians are intelligence personified. Mussolini set up his rule with the alien spirit of militarism as embodied in his blackshirt cohorts. He reached the pinnacle of power with the aid of the least articulate part of public opinion. While he has an enviable record of rendering Italian unity real

and driving exhibitionist beggary from the highways, he has done great harm by doing violence to Italy's real nature.

The little man finds his apotheosis in England, where he is the beneficiary of institutionalized democracy. This is all the more remarkable because in England political and social equality do not go hand in hand. The English have a genius for yielding to the inevitable before it is too late. This system has borne fruit in masterpieces of extemporizing. Political importance is instinctive with the average Englishman, which makes him such a formidable force.

It is possible, of course, that the little man in England is not quite so important as he appears to himself when casting his sovereign vote, but the fact—if it is a fact—is so carefully camouflaged that it is scarcely apparent to the naked eye. England's higher classes early discovered that it was better to teach manners to their low-class masters than to let them go on a revolutionary rampage. They may also have found that this policy would flatter the little man into accepting the point of view of the privileged classes. The story of the conversion of several Labour grandees tends to confirm this view. Man has learned that form is sometimes more important than substance and the average Englishman may be of this opinion.

Finally, a question is yet to be answered: If modern dictatorships mirror the popular will, why should democracy appear so precious in the countries of the West? The answer is simply that some people like detective stories while others prefer more substantial literary fare. A dog is satisfied with bones,

while most men like to have their meat. Democracy represents not only a higher grade of civilization, but also greater opportunities for the individual and the nation. The struggle of man for free speech cannot have been merely the perverted desire of a few individuals to be allowed to form strange sounds with their lips. There is such a thing as progress, and democracy is part of it.

What does the average man want of the future? The more nearly average a man is, the more earth-bound are his desires. Life is the goal of all life, and the desire of the average man is concentrated in it. In the past, his fathers gave their lives at the sound of the drum and thus nullified the object of creation. Would the sons do likewise to-day? Probably they would. There is some hope in the fact, however, that the average man is becoming more political-minded. Signs are multiplying that he is becoming aware of the fact that mankind's worst scourge is war. This may mean that soon he will begin really to live, unwilling to let his precious treasures be the stake in the sinister game of the card-sharps we call statesmen.

Post-war humanity seems to be disappointed that these critical days have failed to produce a Julius Cæsar, a Napoleon, or, better still, a great international figure whose country is the world. But most people do not realize that we have a new hero in our midst, Mr. Average Man, a budding hero possibly on his way to true greatness. The present age does not seem to be fit for giants, as it is an age which levels down the peaks, the age of the average man. The future world perhaps will be less romantic

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without the picturesque figures of great adventurers, but more secure in the assurance that man is the master of his own destiny.

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What happens when the wills of the dictators and of their masters clash? Does it not seem as if the dictators of the twentieth century were to endure forever? How many times has the end of the Russian dictatorship been foretold!

Such a clash of wills is not at all impossible, although dictators beware of the Average Man's wrath. There are occasions when a dictatorship may be more elastic than a democratic régime. At best a legislature is a clearing-house of interests that are often non-comparable values. To ascertain the real will of a country is just as difficult as to find out the real will of an individual. The more complicated a person is, the more difficult it is to interpret him, and this applies also to a highly integrated country. In the case of a nation, powerful special interests may also turn the scales.

An inspired dictator, the quintessence of wisdom and honesty, could find out popular will more easily than parliament, if there were such a benevolent tyrant. As a matter of fact, it is not so much popular will as popular prejudice which the dictators express. Both popular will and popular prejudice are fickle. To-day the House of Commons may have a large Conservative majority and the next election may see an overwhelming victory of Labour. Yesterday America's die-hard newspapers hailed the New Deal

as a worthy experiment and to-day they call it communism. Have the dictators a special sense to detect the currents of public opinion?

A glance at the record of dictatorships will show that they have developed a high degree of sensitiveness to the changes of popular will. It is true, at the same time, that they are in a better position to create public opinion than the democracies, which have no concentration camps, Lipari Islands and Siberia to bring dissidents to their senses.

As to how sensitive dictatorships are, take the case of Soviet Russia. Her militant pioneers conceived communism in accordance with the dreams of the early Marxians. The vast Utopia was to be uncontaminated by private property and money. Even family life was to be based on a new idea.

Militant communism did have its trial and it was found wanting. After repeated attempts to modify it, Lenin announced the New Economic Policy, to which reference has already been made. This was a total repudiation of the original idea. Why did Lenin reverse the course of bolshevism? Evidently because he felt that popular will was not in its favour. His object was: *reculer pour mieux sauter*. He was dead when Soviet Russia took the jump: the first Five Year Plan.

This plan was cast on a heroic scale, and it required a heroic life. By that time Russia was ready for a bold experiment, but she was not ready to go on with it indefinitely. One can understand the mentality of the architects of the Five Year Plan. They were fully aware of the difficulties. Although thousands were to die, what did they amount to in

view of the five billion Russians of the next twenty generations who were to benefit by it?

Russia balked, and the Second Five Year Plan placed emphasis on enjoyment and not on heroism. The windows of Moscow's delicatessen stores became filled with bourgeois food, the farmer girls of the *kolkhozes* began to wear lustrous stockings of artificial silk. The ice-cream parlour became a national institution, and leisure was awarded first prize in the scale of human values. Moscow's luxurious Underground and Stalin's much-photographed smile became symbols of the new era. When good times swept heroism out of the way, jazz received the freedom of the bolshevist town. This was a compromise with human nature, which could swallow only a certain dose of heroism.

It is true that the Russian's farm became part of the collective, but it is also true that small houses, gardens and household animals were exempted. Money acquired new significance as a token of social usefulness. A drive was undertaken to sanctify marriage by turning it into a contract based upon the sacred emotions of love, and the relation of children and parents was not affected by revolutionary zeal. Thus the Russia of 1936 differed radically from the Russia of 1926 and 1918.

The same bold departure from established rule characterized the relations of Soviet Russia with the outside world.

*Internationale sera le monde demain.*

This was the formula which the Russian Bolsheviks had inherited from the Paris Commune.



But the Soviets refused to become international. On the contrary, they began to learn the meaning of nationalism. For the first time in his life the *mujik* became nation-conscious. Nationalism was in the air, wafted Moscovard by western breezes. By sacrificing nationalism, an essential part of the communistic creed was abandoned. The first Five Year Plan was carried to victory on the wings of the new idea. Ivan, the *udarnik* in Magnitogorsk, was fired to heroic deeds in riveting by a nationalistically competitive spirit. He had a phantom rival in an American or German labourer; he became a communistic patriot.

Simultaneously, the Third International began to fall into desuetude. Trotsky and his Internationalist die-hards were ousted and the way was free for Stalin's jingo communism. It made little difference that he kept on paying lip-service to internationalism while drumming up public sentiment for communistic patriotism.

The fate of the pre-war empires shows that dictatorships are not immutable forces. The three empires, which had been thought impregnable, fell at the breath of a new age. Modern dictators are well aware of this, and they take good care not to resist the forces that make and unmake kings. Hitler and Mussolini would not be in power if they had failed to learn the lesson taught to them by the Average Man.

While these forces have a universal quality, they are somewhat modified by the country's spirit. Hitler, who dramatizes the Average Man in the German Third Reich, has assumed many characteristics of the emperors of the Second Reich, and Stalin's part would

be different if he were not a successor of Nicholas II, Czar of All the Russias. No matter how loudly bolshevism and fascism proclaim a complete break with the past, they are heirs of yesterday. Hence the significance of the frontiers, which mark a beginning and an end.

Summing up, what shall be our attitude towards those who assert that it is a mere handful of men who guide mankind's destinies? No lists are more popular than those which contain the names of the supposed masters of the universe. Even so outstanding a man as Walther Rathenau played this amusing game. The United States paid considerable attention to a list of forty men, represented as the dictators of that country. Nobody will argue with those who maintain that in certain hands more power is concentrated than in the hands of thousands of others. There is the industrial magnate, who has caught the world's fancy with his ventures into unexplored fields, and there is the banker king, who holds the wires of whole industrial empires in his hand. There is the newspaper czar with a string of publications to back his opinion, which he will retail as the public view. Then there is the pioneer of social ideas, discovering new worlds of thought and letting loose veritable torrents of discussion. Finally, there is the statesman, making a bid to become the symbol of his country, and, above all, there is the demagogue, setting mass emotions afire.

Who would dare to say that these wield no influence or that they, individually, weigh no more than their less exalted contemporaries? Yet we must not exaggerate their importance. Let us realize clearly that

they are successful not because they guide but because they know how to be guided. These are the people who have an ear for social and economic changes and know how to express and exploit deep stirrings in the masses.

Taking just one example: if Marxism really performs a social function, it would exist in some form and under another name even if Karl Marx had never lived. Great ideas are not the inspirations of individual genius but the echoes of the genius of time. Nor does it follow from this that only those movements and ideas survive that are called upon to perform a basic function. Man is such a curious mixture of base and sublime that he thrives not only on reason but also on unreason, seldom able to make his selection between Inferno and Heaven. Great social perversities have placed their stamp on history's important epochs, and sometimes one is inclined to believe that they, more than common sense, have played a greater part. Thus the "mass man", to whom every one belongs—the genius and also the madman—is the one who expresses reason and unreason, crystallized and dramatized by the media of their will.

Man seems to be possessed of a perverse desire to set up gods and make them bear the responsibility for his derelictions. The critical-minded will not be deceived by this identification of ruling ideas with a list of individuals. None of history's great movements could have been translated into life without the masses' active help. Reading the wisdom of ancients and moderns recorded in books still relished or long forgotten, one begins to realize how much of the best thought that man has produced has never

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been given a chance to live. It is neither the original thought of the thinker nor the powerful voice of the dictator that is the decisive factor of history, but those "electric waves" of public opinion which are transmitted by man. They are generated by a mixture of instincts, tradition, logic and illogic anchored deeply in the Average Man, and they are responsible for the web of deeds and misdeeds which is human history.



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